

## PERSONAL

I should have known that it was going to be that kind of week after the incident when I went to talk to a group of teachers one evening. The meeting was scheduled in a community centre where several other events were taking place, and as I stood outside waiting to go in, a couple of sweet old ladies wandered up to me and asked if this was the room where the spiritualist meeting was being held.

Now I occasionally have to communicate with the invisible and the inaccessible, but the teachers I was about to address were a lively lot, and I realized that these innocent dears had no intention of gratuitously insulting an ageing teaching profession. Resisting the temptation to tell them that, if they wished to communicate with the departed, the education committee met on a Tuesday. I directed them to a room next door where their own meeting was assembling.

For the rest of the week I could not escape a series of contacts with spirits from another world, and the recurring topic was elitism. The argument about whether we should concentrate on the best, hoping the rest will be sucked in behind, is one that has been rehearsed through much of this century. The

tendency in recent years has been to try to devote resources to as many of the population as possible, and not merely favour the best endowed. This strategy comes under threat with cutbacks, when the temptation is to allow the achievements of the most able to mask the deficiencies of the under-provided majority.

I was, therefore, horrified to discover a most dramatic and significant shift of policy in one of our major national sports. The Football Association has established a formidable network of support for schoolboy, youth and club football, stretching across the entire country. There have been coaching courses for thousands of teachers, students or village club managers lasting from an hour or two for interest up to longer formal courses for coaching badges. It gave the lie to the commonly held notion that national sports bodies could not organize the proverbial all-party in a brewery, and was greatly admired by the rest of the world.

Now there has been a significant shift in policy at the Football Association away from the grassroots support of thousands of teachers and pupils and towards a new system of elitism. Part-time regional coaches have been



Ted Wragg

fired, and the remaining full-time coaches have been forced to spend more of their time in London working with national youth sides. A soccer school is to be established in Lilleshall where 60 promising 14 to 16-year-olds will live and train.

The die has been cast for a concentration on a small elite in an attempt to produce a stronger national side, with a sharp reduction in support for the

mass of football-loving teachers, pupils and club players. I wrote to the FA to complain that it is a totally misguided move for youth football, and could anything be done about reversing the policy. The reply from the FA was that sweet FA could be done because it was too late.

My next contact with elitism was to read a conference account of a speech given by the junior minister Bob Dunn, who had the interesting assignment of trying to follow two previous incumbents, Rhodes Boyson and William Shelton. Bob Dunn (anagram: "Bun" Bond), the would-be secret agent who consumed too many carbohydrates, was described by one journalist after a press conference as "a boring version of Rhodes Boyson" and by another as "less impressive than William Shelton". A cruel lot these journalists, but since Will Sh., you know who, had as much impact on education as a grain of sand landing on the Pacific Ocean, I awaited No-Funn Dunn's maiden pronouncement with bated breath.

His conference address was a spirited defence of elitism and selection, but I find it hard to follow the logic of his argument. He has apparently

announced that he himself failed the 11-plus. It follows, therefore, that he believes the 11-plus was an accurate measure, he must accept that he was correctly diagnosed as not too bright. If, on the other hand, he is indeed very able, and feels it was an inaccurate procedure, then it is not very clever to seek to reintroduce it. Either way things do not look promising on the IQ front for Mr Dunn.

It was not until Sunday of this bizarre week of mine that sense returned. Mike Brearley, writing about my hero Geoffrey Boycott, England's finest batsman, described why he thought the great man was not a good team captain. After one bad day in the field, he recounted, Sir Geoffrey came off the pitch, lay down on a bench, put a towel over his face, and left Bob Willis to work out the batting order. Brilliant, if you think about it. Forget management by objectives and all that managerialist nonsense. When all around you is chaos, rely on the good sense of your colleagues for a spontaneous solution to your problem. Just lie down on the floor and practise that new concept Management-With-A-Towel-Over-Your-Head. Thank Geoff.

## DIARY

## Little room at the top

The current top educational jobs - in the £25,000 to £35,000 bracket - are filling up fast. Eric Bolton has got that of the chief HMI; Bob Morris has returned, after a short spell running Lewisham, for ILEA, to be top

simply speaking for the vast majority to find a suitable Chief Inspector for her own threatened bailiwick of ILEA. The authority got its first one from the ranks of the HMI - a former teacher with the topical and appropriate name of Mr Michael Birchborough - and they were hoping to get the next one in the same way, but Sir Keith pinched Eric Bolton before they could. So they'll probably promote an incumbent.

I hope he or she turns out to be a brave soul, because these top jobs are proving crucial in the present chilly, totalitarian atmosphere. Not that I'm expecting my old friend Bob Morris to disappear in the guise of Sir William Alexander of old, as a public champion of local autonomy (though there are those in the world of education who wanted Sir William out and are now wishing him back) but it would be nice to think that he will stand up to the corporate managers - both the old

ones in the AMA and the new ones in the DES who seem to think that they can run local authorities from Elizabeth House.

In the recent White Paper, we are promised three years of direct rule for

that they will have even less success with ILEA than their fellow functionaries attempting direct rule in Northern Ireland.

It seems that at the confidential press briefing on how they were going to tame ILEA (to which they undoubtedly failed to invite me) Mr Walter Ulrich, the DES deputy secretary and expert in these matters, was not much more informative than he was when trying to explain the workings of the 1944 Education Act to the Select Committee two years ago.

When the new ILEA collapses in chaos and when Walter is asked to take over as Commissioner, I advise him to decline the job. There are only five people who fully understand how ILEA works and none of them would dream of telling Walter. If he, or any of his fellow functionaries took up the job, they'd be inviting an early nervous breakdown.

## Paper chase

I'm no longer a passionate believer in the intrinsic worth of educational research, since becoming the daily harassed victim of it. One of the hazards of being the ex-chairman of the Select Committee is that I find myself deluged by a steady stream of post-graduate students from Brunel to Sussex who want to "test hypotheses" about the achievements of my committee. I suppose we asked for it; all that paper we turned out is useful to the education profession. I always cooperate, but always emerge amazed how little the thought-patterns induced by a training in sociology mesh with my sort of reality. It finally convinces me that I don't really want to end up, as a

## A good read

For those who want something unsociological and simple to read about standards in education, I recommend, in preference to the wangled output of secret briefings, the excellent summary of HM Inspectorate's 1983 report which the National Union of Teachers have issued. It simply lists Sheila Brown's final judgement of the neglect of our schools by her political masters: books, buildings, teacher overload, special needs, the curriculum. The message is clear - that basic provision is at risk on a widespread scale.

Now Miss Brown is safely cloistered at Nymham, I hope Mr Bolton will mark her trenchant style in his current efforts to produce the 1984 report - which I am sure will come out much earlier than his predecessor. There'll be no excuse of a general election to delay it this time.

## The last rites?

To a wake at some plastic hotel in Bloomsbury, to attend the obsequies on adult education in our time. The service is conducted by Richard Hoggart and the former members of the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education. We are given a good dry sherry, a tolerable white wine and a hybrid green document containing the Order of Service entitled Six years of research, advice and encouragement: a record of progress in difficult times.

The first half is a fine eighteenth century tract, penned in the authentic Hoggart literacy style in praise of true adult education "without bossiness, divisiveness, competitiveness or self seeking" and laying into "popular journalists and populist councillors" who don't understand it. He sees our present society as "firing on only two cylinders" (the engine is presumably meant to be a Ford V8), and wants it transformed by adult education.

The second half is written in a somewhat different style and bears the

clinical, analytic marks of Naomi Sargent. It's a justification of ACACE's efforts during its six years of office, and a condemnation of the government for not even bothering to reply to their latest reports.

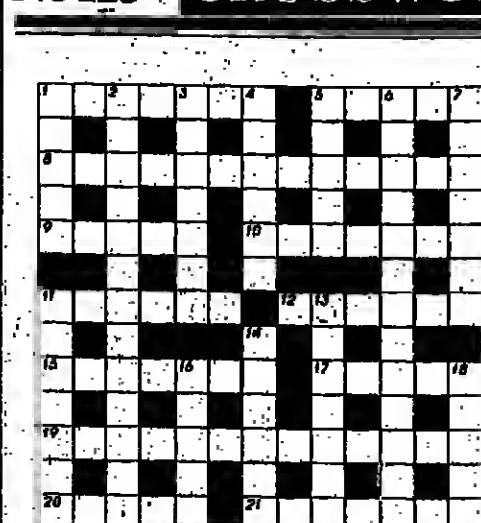
It ends up: "To continue, as the nation does, with policies which concentrate fully 90 per cent of educational resources on the initial education of children and young people reflect a habit and priorities derived from a settled society in settled employment within a settled framework of knowledge and skill which has long ceased to reflect the changing and anxious world we inhabit."

Peter Brooke, the minister in charge of these things, tells me that though Cyril Norwood (the inventor of late-day grammar schools and A-levels) was his actual godfather, Albert Mainbridge was his spiritual one. I hope Peter has the courtesy to reply to these funeral obsequies; and remembers that in his diemmas about how to do so, I shall be rooting for Albert.

With ACACE gone, the threat to adult education is now very real, especially from those grey mandarins plotting against it from the woodwork of the Treasury. In their book, any improving activity an adult over the age of 25 engages in should be reclassified from "education" to "recreation", charged for at full cost and made subject to VAT. It's happening already.

Christopher Price

## No 123 CROSSWORD by Rufus



### Down

- The hoarder of Reims (3)
- Closely fought embryonic competition (5,7)
- New process evolved in the mortuary (7)
- The most logical form of ascent (6)
- Government authority (5)
- A part of one sort of pedestrian crossing (5,5)
- They take no end of towels (7)
- A reply showing an or spite perhaps (7)
- A complaint soon putted (7)
- Quieten down and puzzle people (8)
- Love only 10 upsets a fool (5)
- Mother's taken on at the lodge (5)

### Across

- Threats can seem ridiculous (7)
- A process that gives difficulties (5)
- It helps to drive one round the bend (8,5)
- Parts with some bread, we hear (5)
- Conscientious objection (7)
- Neglect about tops (8)
- Changes which should be made by wrongdoers (6)
- Careless a girl on the knee (5)
- Mass withdrawal on the Indian border (5)
- They filled up a form at the same time (6-7)
- Composition makes easy point (5)
- Fantastic sea-bird from the Orient (7)



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## CSE boards take big step towards open market

by Nick Wood

The CSE boards have made a significant move towards scrapping their cherished constitutional commitment to regionalism - the arrangement under which schools can enter candidates only for exams run by their local board.

If regionalism is eventually abandoned - as now seems increasingly likely - schools would have complete freedom to pick and choose among the new GCE O level/CSE exams which are being developed throughout the country while Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, deliberates over whether to give official blessing to a single system at 16-plus.

Traditional CSE exams - which can be taken only by schools within a designated catchment area - would then be free to compete for the free market philosophy to extend this free market philosophy to the joint exams.

The GCE boards say the present arrangements are causing them "serious concern", because schools are not allowed to choose syllabuses and exams on strict educational merit.

To ensure that their candidates are eligible for both O level and CSE certification from just one exam - a major attraction of joint exams - schools are naturally opting for those offered by their local group.

Mr John Day, co-ordinator of the GCE secretariats, has warned the CSE boards: "The principle of freedom of choice at 16-plus is likely to be exercised less and less often and will consequently wither and disappear, with the common system of examining becoming almost uniformly regionally based."

The GCE boards were backed by Mr Bill Frearson, of the South East CSE board, who unsuccessfully urged the immediate end to regionalism.

He reminded the conference that when and if the 16-plus came, schools would have a free choice.

"However much we huddle inside our territories in developing our joint syllabuses, when the single system arrives, these joint syllabuses will be thrown open. If that is the case, what is the point now of creating artificial barriers to the free choice of school?"

However, other representatives at the conference pointed to the benefits of regionalism - greater participation by teachers in the design of syllabuses and exams and closer links between boards and schools - and said that it would be prudent to wait until Sir Keith had decided whether to go ahead with the 16-plus before making up their minds.

The move towards "deregionalization" comes after pressure from the CSE boards - which accept entries from schools irrespective of their loca-

tion, to extend this free market philosophy to the joint exams.

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Home and school: at Lewknor primary school in Oxfordshire parents are encouraged to take their children home in school time for an afternoon's project work (page 16).

## Least truancy at grammars

Irregular school attendance is nearly twice as high in comprehensive as in grammar schools, and higher than in secondary moderns, according to a survey of 450,000 pupils in the north-west of the country.

The survey revealed that in one week in March this year more than 25 per cent of pupils in comprehensives were absent at some time, compared with 13.7 per cent in grammar schools and 21 per cent in secondary moderns. In primary schools the figure was about 17 per cent.

In all schools, those who were absent were most likely to have missed one or two half days, though in comprehensives a significant number were away for the whole week.

The principal reason was illness, confirmed or alleged, although there was considerable variation between authorities.

The survey was carried out by the North Western Regional Society of Education Officers.

## Multiracial study pioneer in Grenada coup

Mr Bernard Coard, Grenada's deputy prime minister involved in the coup that overthrew the government of Mr Maurice Bishop last week, first made his name as a teacher in London in 1971.

His book, *How the West Indian child is made educational, subnormal in the British school system*, caused an uproar, but opened the door to the multi-ethnic initiatives in authorities as disparate as Inner London, Berkshire and Bradford.

Drawing from a three-year survey of placements at ESN schools, Mr Coard argued that many bright black children were being wrongly labelled as subnormal and consigned to a form of schooling that later caused them to become emotionally disturbed.

As a founder member of Teachers Against Racism, he also claimed that streaming policies in secondary schools were racist because they led to a preponderance of black children in the bottom forms.

This weak educationist recalled Mr Coard's contribution. Dr Peter Mortimore, director of research and statistics for the ILEA said: "In a sense he was ahead of his time - a trail blazer. The whole idea of institutional racism and teachers' low expectations of black kids began with his work."

Mr Max Morris, former president of the National Union of Teachers and until 1978 head of Willesden High in Brent, where three out of four pupils are black, disagreed. Mr Coard's book was "provocative trash" and he persistently ignored the efforts of many

teachers to help black children," Mr Morris said.

"He believed in some sort of system of proportional representation whereby kids in ESN schools had to be exactly proportional to the colour of their skin."

"What he did was to set the stage for an orchestrated campaign against teachers for being racists."

Since the coup and the American invasion, the fate and whereabouts of Mr Coard, aged 39, remain a mystery. Earlier his Moscow-style Marxism was reported to have triumphed against the populist revolutionary politics of Mr Bishop, who seized power in 1979.

Nick Wood



Bernard Coard... fate a mystery

## Strictly off the record ... of course

Since I wasn't invited to the confidential briefing about standards at the Polytechnic of North London either, I am unable to report what Eric Bolton, the DES's new Senior Chief Inspector and his sundry assistants said about it. But I do, in principle, think it unwise for inspectors to get mixed up in this business of unattributable brief-



Stuart Sexton

ings. They should write their reports, publish them and leave the titillating to Mr Oliver Levin and Mr Stuart Sexton, their ministers' political plotters, who are far more adept at the art and whose educational credentials my learned colleagues from the Education Correspondents Group are more competent to judge.

Indeed Mr Bolton and his colleagues should take their cue from the tough and principled line being taken by



Ken Livingstone

the DES statisticians, who are standing up well both to Sir Keith and to Downing Street in their plans for just a little thought before bestowing upon the noble Baroness Cox even more public money with which to "research" comprehensive education. It doesn't really help the Government's case against Ken Livingstone's alleged profligacy towards his political friends. If the Prime Minister insists on dispensing such generous hand-outs to hers,

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## The missing link in policy-making

It is now some 18 months since Sir Keith Joseph announced his decision to scrap the Schools Council and replace it with separate bodies for examinations and curriculum. Moving with none of the speed which the importance of the matters in question might have been thought to demand, Sir Keith has inched his way forward.

For reasons which have never been clearly explained, it took the best part of a year to set up the examination council, which was given ostentatious priority over the curriculum body. But it is now operating under the chairmanship of Sir Wilfred Cockcroft and hopes to send Sir Keith its formal views on the feasibility of the proposed single system of 16-plus examinations early in the New Year. As Sir Wilfred indicated in an interview (page 8), this will entail reaching agreement on the degree of differentiation needed – how many common or separate papers will be required to accommodate the range of ability – and the resources which will have to be provided to do the job properly, as well as advising on the tortured process which sets out the examination criteria in the main subject areas.

One of the examination council's tasks is to get Sir Keith off one or two of the hooks on which he has so needlessly impaled himself – as, for instance, when he chose to adjudge the physicists not to trouble their weary heads with the social context of science.

Sir Wilfred clearly leans to the view of those who believe that a form of words can be found which saves Sir Keith's face while allowing teachers to do justice to the wider social impact of science and technology. Whether it is any part of the examination council's job to save Sir Keith's ideological face is another matter. This will be one of Sir Wilfred's early tests, does he see his

al instrument for carrying out the policy of ministers, or as one which is prepared to accept a wider allegiance to the whole educational enterprise and preserve its independent integrity?

It is plain that what the DES would like is to replace the Schools Council with two technical bodies. One of these is an examination council which will attend closely to the interesting and complex questions about examination technique, standards and administration, which are the concern of the examining bodies, and coordinate national examination policy as determined by the Secretary of State.

The decision to separate examinations from curriculum development implies that it is not a central part of the examination council's job to consider the content which will form the substance of the examination syllabuses, except in so far as it becomes involved in reconciling conflicting propositions put forward by examining boards or mediating curricular judgments handed down by the Secretary of State and his advisors.

The curriculum development committee, the second body, which is now in the last stages of gestation, is similarly conceived as a limited, technical body. Its job is to take hold of the decisions on curriculum policy which have been made elsewhere and consider what specific development activities are required to help the schools carry them out as well as possible. Where the Schools Council had been a body which could make its own agenda and establish its own priorities, the implicit assumption behind the curriculum development committee is that its priorities and its agenda will be made elsewhere – in the syllabus-building functions of the examinations council, in the publications of the DES, and in the other decisions of the DES.

There is a strong, if limited, case to be made for such a body with such a role. There is a bipartisan desire to see the curriculum sorted out – to see with greater clarity what is meant to be on offer for all pupils. Where once it was an expression of the natural consensus to include in schools' articles of governments a clause making the curriculum the responsibility of the head, the post-1980 Act revisions now going through are continually taking that responsibility away and lodging it with the local education authority. The process will be speeded up by the curriculum circular now going out.

Each L.E.A. will have to establish its own curriculum framework and lay down the principles which heads and their staff will have to apply. And the logic points not simply to more L.E.A. control, as might at first appear, but to more DES control, because these local frameworks and principles will have to be made conformable to the over-arching curricular structure which the present Secretary of State, the grand centralizer *malgré lui*, is busily erecting.

Given for the first time the infrastructure for a national curriculum, it makes a lot of sense to take the further step of setting up a tame curriculum body. For the next year or two it will not have much money to spare for new development, but it could well be used to set up a development project on, say, translating Cockcroft into a series of mathematics courses or doing the same for any of the other major subject areas affected by the 16-plus examination exercise. It would not be theirs to reason why, but they could certainly be used to get on with the work.

The logic of this would point not to the increasing independence of the committee (which the local authority associations will be at pains to defend) but to a DES take-over at the appropriate time. The DES would feel much happier with it

inside the office like the Further Education Curriculum Development Unit (though that body's tendency to get out of line, and its high and therefore, to the DES threatening, reputation outside, has not given it an easy ride of late).

The question which arises is not about whether some greater measure of central coordination of the curriculum is needed: this question, practically speaking, has been answered. The consequence is that it is. Some Ministers – of whom Sir Keith is one – feel unhappy about the idea of consensus when there is general agreement, they feel something must be wrong, the soft-centre must have triumphed. But the time-scales of education demand sustained agreement and that means securing a broad, common base. This cannot be done just by building up the DES and supporting it with tame committees.

Larger issues of curriculum policy should be left to the DES alone – they demand, as the 1944 Education Act explicitly provided, the kind of collective consideration which only a body like the Central Advisory Council can provide. The Secretary of State is entitled to the consistent advice such a body could give and, by the same token, the educational world is entitled to such a forum in which policy proposals can be tested in a broad discussion involving laymen and professionals alike.

Nobody could argue that the CAC was perfect, nor yet that its legal constitution should be beyond argument, but it served a valuable function, which is now even more necessary. It was during the 40 years and more when it was predecessor operated.

Neither Sir Keith nor the Department should be allowed to go unchallenged in forging a new instrument of central, social, control, which less scrupulous successors will not hesitate to use for their own political purposes.

## COMMENT

### A matter of taste

The "Network Campus" venture in "private" adult education may be an interesting sign of the times (page 1). The adult education provided by local authorities and voluntary bodies has come under ever increasing pressure, and this has forced up the prices charged to participants. Even so, there remains a wide price differential between the £8 for a two-hour evening "taster" course offered by Network Campus and the more modest fees levied by L.E.A.s for recreational courses.

As Arthur Stock, director of the National Institute for Adult Education, was quick to point out, this is neither a serious threat to the public sector nor dramatic vindication of the virtues of private education. It is an attempt to fill some middle class gap in a way acceptable to a fairly narrow segment of the potential market for adult education. In theory, at least, the organizers are trying to give people the chance to "taste" and make up their minds whether they want to commit themselves to a more extended course of study. If the approach is successful it might well increase the total demand for evening courses, in L.E.A. colleges as well as in private groups like those now being advertised.

What this probably reflects is not just an attempt to meet a supposed need on the part of students, but also the availability of many evening class teachers – people whose employment has been cut back with the curtailment of adult education generally. Having seen public sector adult education squeezed by the combination of higher fees and reduced local authority activity, their teachers may well be interested to see what the traffic will

bear, stripped of the old L.E.A. evening class image and given a more explicitly market orientation.

Of course, it just might take off and do for recreational evening classes what aerobics did for Keep Fit. Or it might not, in which case the mainstreamers in the evening institutes will shake their heads knowingly and relax.

### Carry on excellence

The Social Science Research Council can carry on unmolested – provided the work it supports is "excellent". That was the counsel of perfection conveyed to the Council's new chairman, Sir Douglas Hague, in a letter from his friend Sir Keith Joseph last week. It was widely seen as an attempt to rebuild the confidence shattered by the unnecessary Rothschild inquiry (in fact, Lord Rothschild gave the Council a clean bill of health) and a £6m cut over three years.

Sir Keith made it clear that the Council's days in the doghouse were over. No further inquiry into its work was planned, he said, and he repeated his intention of giving it a period of stability after the run-down of funds up to 1985-86 (although, being Sir Keith, he added that he could give no guarantee).

The letter even appeared to rebuke the fact that the social sciences were academically respectable – with no exception made for sociology. "The interests and disciplines within the council's field are unquestionably important, inherently difficult and properly find a place in higher education, research and scholarship," Sir Keith wrote.

But, of course, the Education Secretary can rest secure in the knowledge that the council is in safe hands.



Sir Keith Joseph



Sir Douglas Hague

"Our initial conversations have shown that we share the conviction that your Council should encourage excellence regardless of current orthodoxies," his letter said. Spoken as one true free market man to another:

### Jenkin sets out the sums

Last week's peremptory announcement of the rate support grant for 1984-85 (page 5) did little more than do the 'S's and the 'S's of the Government's earlier statements' on spending targets and penalties for next year, and legal curbs thereafter. Having made it clear that that draconian targets would be severely probed, and that he had a bit list of Labour-controlled metropolitan authorities to mind for special treatment, Mr Portlock Jenkin, the Environment Secretary, did not even think it worth while giving the consultation Council on local government finance (which he had the RSG details to consultation

Among the fragments of new bad news that many authorities heard about second-hand was the decision to reduce the central government share of local spending; it has since been carefully leaked that support would have been chopped even more drastically if a fierce fight had not been put up by those guardians of local liberty, Mr Jenkin and Sir Keith Joseph.

Even more severe is the decision to impose steeply rising penalties as soon as a local authority goes a per cent over the target spending limit.

This year, the threshold point was 2 per cent. One of the most telling findings of a TES survey of local authority spending carried out in April was that many authorities were learning how to work the system by keeping overspending just below the penalty limit. Even so, the budgeted overspend amounted to around £770m.

Making penalties bite at 1 per cent this time round is yet another attempt to get the overspend down but it will be no surprise if next spring many authorities are to be found budgeting just under the 1 per cent limit.

### SHA likely to recruit deputies

The Secondary Heads Association is preparing to admit deputy heads to its membership for the first time.

The executive of the 3,000-strong association voted by 45 votes to 7 in favour of the move – which could potentially triple its membership – at its weekend. An extraordinary meeting of the association has been arranged for November 19 to decide on amending the association's rules to allow the change to go ahead.

Peter Snape, the new general secretary of the association, said: "The SHA has already been consulting its members on the feeling that the SHA should have its own organization. It is also felt that the position of a deputy head is an isolated one. Deputies are a management responsibility and as such are part of a partnership with their head teacher."

The SHA has been considering the question of whether deputies should be allowed to join for some time. The National Association of School Teachers, and "other head teachers' organization, does not admit deputies."

Mixed move  
Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, has agreed that Teddington Secondary School, in the London borough of Richmond upon Thames, should become a mixed school from September next year.

The borough's remaining 'girls' school, in Twickenham, will be re-organized as a mixed school.

A local authority authority said that it was less than 100 yards from the school. However, the proposal was rejected by the local authority. The proposal was rejected by the local authority.

"Game for a Dolphin" exhibition

## NEWS

### L.e.a.s in grants fight

by Biddy Passmore

The Government's Bill enabling the Education Secretary to make specific grants to councils for new initiatives was greeted with pledges of stiff opposition from the local authorities when it was published on Wednesday.

The chief complaint of both the Labour-controlled Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Tory-controlled Association of County Councils is that the scheme does not involve extra money. The Government will simply deduct up to 1/2 per cent from its spending plans for the local education services and pay out the amount in grants to selected councils. (This would have been some £46m in the current year.)

"As a time when local government spending is being further restricted and local authorities who exceed their targets are threatened with increasingly severe penalties, local authorities cannot support a suggestion that the Secretary of State should take money away from all local authorities to pay it back to some," Mr Philip Merridale, chairman of the ACC's education committee, said.

Mr Merridale and Mrs Nicole Harrison, chairman of the AMA's education committee, said the effect of the legislation would be to centralize more power in the Education Secretary's hands. "It's the Secretary of State deciding on education priorities," Mrs Harrison said.

The new grants, which will be payable from April 1985, are intended to encourage innovations and improvements, such as technical education and computer-aided learning. But final decisions on the areas to be covered will not be taken until after consultation with the local authorities. The so-called "support grants" will meet up to 10 per cent of the authority's approved expenditure on a project. The Bill was given its first reading – a formality – in the Commons on Tuesday. The main debate on its contents is scheduled for the second reading in November.

### SHA likely to recruit deputies

The Secondary Heads Association is preparing to admit deputy heads to its membership for the first time.

The executive of the 3,000-strong association voted by 45 votes to 7 in favour of the move – which could potentially triple its membership – at its weekend. An extraordinary meeting of the association has been arranged for November 19 to decide on amending the association's rules to allow the change to go ahead.

Peter Snape, the new general secretary of the association, said: "The SHA has already been consulting its members on the feeling that the SHA should have its own organization. It is also felt that the position of a deputy head is an isolated one. Deputies are a management responsibility and as such are part of a partnership with their head teacher."

The SHA has been considering the question of whether deputies should be allowed to join for some time. The National Association of School Teachers, and "other head teachers' organization, does not admit deputies."

Mixed move  
Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, has agreed that Teddington Secondary School, in the London borough of Richmond upon Thames, should become a mixed school from September next year.

The borough's remaining 'girls' school, in Twickenham, will be re-organized as a mixed school.

A local authority authority said that it was less than 100 yards from the school. However, the proposal was rejected by the local authority. The proposal was rejected by the local authority.

"Game for a Dolphin" exhibition

## Part-time jobs blamed for fall-off in O level passes

by Nick Wood

Saturday jobs are to blame for a "drastic" fall in O level exam passes at a comprehensive school, the headmaster has said.

Mr John Lilly, head of Ringwood School in Hampshire, which has 850 pupils aged 11 to 16, has written to all parents warning them that many children are devoting too much time to part-time jobs and neglecting their studies.

"For too many students the heavy demands of part-time work are affecting their real job which is their work in school. This is a serious problem," parents were told.

Mr Lilly also pointed out that the long hours worked by some youngsters, as many as 15 hours over a weekend, contravened the county's regulations on the employment of young people and meant they were not insured against possible accidents.

"I hate to think of what would happen if your child was injured, for example, working in the kitchen of a

local restaurant," his letter said. The headmaster's warning came after the school investigated part-time work among its pupils. Seven out of ten of the fifth-formers who took their O levels this summer were found to have a job, mostly in service industries such as pubs, hotels, restaurants and supermarkets, and two in 10 were working hours that broke the law.

The result he claimed, was a sudden drop in exam passes. In 1982, nearly one in three youngsters got five or more O levels, but this summer the proportion was down to one in five.

Mr Lilly explained he was mainly concerned about the upper 40 per cent of the ability range, though not the handful of very talented children. Around 1 in 10 fifth-formers had wrecked their prospects of good exam results by spending too long on part-time jobs, he said.

"A child who should have got seven or eight O levels was getting two – that's what I mean by drastic," he said.

Such children were now just "going through the motions" at school, Mr Lilly added. "For the first time ever in this school, five children did not bother to turn up for their exams. I have worked in urban areas where it is a big problem but it's never happened here before."

Exams seemed less important to young people now, he said, mainly because of the difficulties of getting a full-time job when they left school. Instead, they were more interested in the status and material possessions, such as motor cycles, that came with having money in their pockets.

"They say it's best to get any job – even a part-time one – because that could lead to a real job at 16. Others are not going on to further education and taking jobs way below their ability level."

Mr Roger Bettle, president of the town's chamber of trade, said he was unaware of any breach of the employment regulations.



John Lilly... children just going through the motions

"We don't think we are to blame and it seems a bit unfair of Mr. Lilly to generalize about the traders," he said. But the matter would be raised at the chamber's next meeting and, if warranted, an investigation begun.

### Statistician in research plea over exam results

by Philip Venning

Any government money for further research into exam results at comprehensive and selective schools would be better spent on studying the National Children's Bureau figures than those of the National Council for Educational Standards, a leading educational statistician said this week.

Professor Horvay Goldstein, of the London Institute of Education, said that it would be wrong for Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, to bow to pressure to reverse last week's decision to turn down an application from the NCEs for government funds to continue their controversial research.

In rejecting the application, Sir Keith called for a meeting between the authors of the NCEs study and their critics among government statisticians. Opponents of the NCEs believe that a compromise could be reached which would enable Sir Keith to change his mind.

This week Professor Goldstein said that much of the statistical argument about the validity of the study which showed that in 1981 selective schools got better exam results than comprehensives missed the point.

The study had been widely criticized for using an unrepresentative sample (denied by the NCEs), but the important point was to compare the lotsize of schools with exam results at the end.

The NCEs did not have any figures for intake, while an earlier study by the National Children's Bureau did. This study concluded there were few major differences between comprehensive and selective school exam results.

On teacher training, Mr Peter Brooke, minister responsible for higher education, reiterated the Government's view that it could not be committed to allocating a fixed and unchanging share of teacher training places to colleges supported by any particular denomination.

Mr Bob Dunn, junior minister for schools, said that provisional figures for the Assisted Places Scheme showed that intake this year had risen to 4,700, bringing the total number of children now taking part to some 13,000.

### Government to look at pupil profile views

The Government will soon be inviting views from local education authorities, teachers, industry, commerce and public service employers on the development of pupil profiles, it was announced this week.

Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, told MPs during Question Time that he would be sending out a draft statement of policy and principles for action in this field. His aim was to secure the more widespread use of records of achievement for school-leavers of all abilities, he said.

Sir Keith said he would be holding a national conference early next year on the selection of head teachers.

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### NUT conference snub to Sir Keith will continue

by Richard Garner

For the third year running leaders of the National Union of Teachers have decided against inviting a Government spokesman to address their annual conference next year.

A move to invite Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, to address their annual conference in Blackpool next Easter was defeated when it was discussed by the union's executive.

The tradition of having the Education Secretary address the annual conference was first broken when Sir Keith's predecessor, Mr Manly Card, announced that he could not attend the Easter conference of the NUT and the National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers because he was visiting Mexico.

In his first year as Education Secretary, Sir Keith Joseph was invited to address the NUT conference – but this was withdrawn after a dispute over pay in the run-in to the conference season.

Teachers' leaders planned part of the blame for the dispute on the government because it had recently abolished their unit-then statutory right to allow any salary dispute to go to arbitration if negotiations had failed to reach a conclusion.

Last year, the executive voted again not to invite Sir Keith as a protest against the education cuts. This decision has now been reaffirmed.

### Most Oxford colleges agree on changes to reduce public school 'advantage'

Changes in Oxford University's admissions procedure which should increase the proportion of entrants from maintained schools now seem certain to go ahead. Agreement is expected from some three-quarters of the colleges.

The main change will be an end to the "seventh term" – that is, post-A level – special exam, which is thought to give an advantage to public school candidates. All candidates sitting the exam will now have to take it before their A levels.

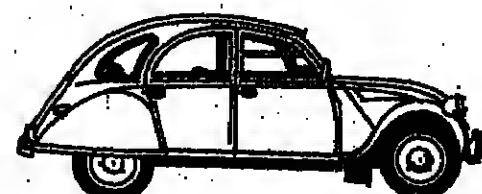
Approval has also been won for making all offers, both conditional and those based on the entrance exam, at the same time, so that all candidates are considered together. Candidates are also to be allowed to opt for an "open application" to the university, under which they would be considered for any college.

Thus, the main recommendations of the report drawn up by Sir Kenneth Dover, president of Corpus Christi College, have won the day.

Disagreement still remains, however, over whether the university should send out to candidates a table of colleges setting out their preferred method of entry, subject by subject. Sir Kenneth feels strongly that this would conflict with the open applications procedure.

Tutors in some subjects, notably modern languages, maths and classics, are also likely to insist on a written test for candidates.

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## Refugees face loss of grant

Hundreds of political refugees could be deprived of mandatory grants because the Government has failed to give them home student status, according to the World University Service.

The students affected are mainly Iranians who came to Britain in the late 1970s and applied for asylum after the 1979 revolution.

In that year the Government introduced "full cost fees" for overseas students. Refugees were shielded from the sudden increase by special regulations passed in 1981 giving them home student status and thus eligibility for lower fees and mandatory grants.

But, earlier this year, ministers introduced legislation tightening up residence qualifications. And subsequent regulations, according to WUS, discriminate between those who came to Britain as refugees and those who were already studying here when they were granted asylum.

The latter may now have to wait three years before qualifying for a grant because their status is left to the discretion of the I.E.S. or institution.

WUS was alerted to the change by the case of an Iranian who came to Britain in 1975 to take O and A levels followed by a TEC diploma in civil engineering. He has now been granted asylum but has been refused a grant by West Glamorgan to study for a civil engineering degree at the Polytechnic of Wales.

## Adult enrolment up to 10 per cent

One in ten people in Derbyshire took adult education classes in the last academic year, the county's education authorities report this week. Enrolment rose from 72,302 students on vocational, leisure and remedial courses in the authority's 26 centres.

## Rate-capping threat to 2,500 London jobs

by Biddy Passmore

Government plans to curb local spending could cause the loss of more than 2,500 teaching jobs in inner London, according to calculations made by the Inner London Education Authority.

The loss of jobs would be one implication of cutting back the ILEA budget to its Government target of £790m over two years, officials have estimated. And that could be what happens from 1985-86 when the amount the authority can demand from the boroughs is limited by law, and in 1986 when the ILEA is succeeded by a joint board controlled for three years by the Department of Education.

But ILEA's Labour leaders do not plan to start doing ministers' job for them. Of three spending options for 1984-85 sent out for public consultation last week, the stiffest envisages an overall cut of only £10m out of a budget of more than £900m.

The other two options, on which Londoners have six weeks to make their views known, would involve adding £10m and £20m respectively to next year's estimated budget of £910m-£925m, which is based on continuing current policies and allowing 5 per cent for inflation. (The current year's budget is £869m.)

"The authority does not accept that rate-capping is an inevitability," Mr Steve Hindred, chairman of ILEA's finance subcommittee, said. The Government's plans were "relevant matters for consideration although not a decision on the part of the authority." The budget would be decided, after consultation, with reference to the needs of education in inner London.

Mr Hindred was choosing his words carefully. To avoid the charge that the ILEA is being irresponsible, and thus laying members open to legal action and a surcharge, it must take "all relevant factors" into account.

Although ILEA will be one of the authorities hardest hit by the Government's rate-capping plans, it is, ironically, certain to be untouched by the severe grant penalties for next year just announced by Mr Patrick Jenkin, the Environment Secretary (page 5). That is because its projected budget is so far above the Government's target that it will receive no grant at all for the third year running. Borough taxpayers pick up the whole bill for education in inner London, including an estimated £150m in lost grant.

But the boroughs themselves will suffer from the new grant penalties and will thus put heavy pressure on the ILEA to keep its spending down. The three options sent out for consultation last week would mean rises of between 3½ and 9 per cent in the 77 rate ILEA already demands from them.

The most generous of the three (option C) would permit the authority to spend an extra £20m for new developments next year such as non-advanced courses for unemployed teenagers or removing asbestos from school buildings. The least generous (option A) would permit extra spending of some £5m, more than matched by savings of £15m.

The consultation document, of which 15,000 copies are to be circulated at a cost of £5,000, concedes that savings need to be made.

## NUT voices opposition

by Richard Garner

A teachers' union is opposing an education authority's plans to make attendance on racism awareness courses compulsory for all newly-appointed teachers.

The plan has been put forward by councillors in Labour-controlled Brent as part of an attempt to combat racism in the classroom. But the Brent branch of the National Union of Teachers says it is against compulsory attendance.

Mr Malcolm Horne, a Brent teacher and executive member of the NUT for outer London, said: "We have made it clear we have no objection whatsoever to racism courses and we would urge our members to go on them. But we have made it clear that we are against making our conditions of service to make attendance compulsory."

"What would happen if another council of a different persuasion brought in courses that we opposed?"

Brent councillors have now decided to submit their proposals either to the next meeting of the council's joint consultative committee with teachers' unions or to a special working party on conditions of service.

Meanwhile, a similar argument is brewing within the Labour-led London Education Authority, the London branch of the National Union of Teachers is accusing Mr Horne of being "provocative" in sending the message to teachers that they are not to be asked to play an active part in the authority's initiatives against racism.

Classes for unionists

A major initiative in adult education for trade union members has been launched by the National Union of Public Employees.

NUPE is pioneering the courses which give manual workers the chance to go on literacy courses in their lunch hours and on day release.

The scheme, financed as a pilot project originally by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, is now being sponsored by the Inner London Education Authority at a cost of £27,000 a year. It is based in London but NUPE is sending details of it to its regions in the hope that similar initiatives will start up.

The TUC's south-east region is now taking the London project under its umbrella. In the hope that similar schemes can be mounted in other areas - in private industry as well as in the public sector.

NUPE found that a large percentage of its members who wanted to go on the courses had learned English as a second language.

## Conflict in goals

Hampshire County Council has written to Mr Tom King, the Employment Secretary, complaining that Major Services Commission proposals require more local authority staff time when the Department of the Environment is pressing for major reductions.

In their letter, Mr Frederick Egan, Wallis, the council leader, and Philip Merridale, chairman of the education committee, say that Hampshire supports the policy of manpower, and had reduced staff by nearly 4,000 since 1979. But the authority had also taken a leading role in supporting the Youth Training Scheme, the expansion of the care service and further education colleges. This had meant they were "not being considered less positive or effective in pursuing staffing cuts."

They urge Mr King to approach Patrick Jenkin, the Environment Secretary, to take MSC work into consideration when pressing for further staff cuts.

## Team teaching antidote urged

More evidence of over-didactic teaching emerges from a report by the Inspectorate on advanced level courses in public administration at the Polytechnic of Wales.

Both the teaching style and the over-timetable of some courses leave students with too little opportunity to think and study for themselves, the report says. Staff make little attempt to vary their approach, even when students are bored. The report recommends more team teaching, both within and across disciplines.

The report also stresses that the staff concerned are "very adequately qualified", with a considerable range of experience: it is their teaching competence which needs development.

The Inspectorate says they were impressed with the good relationships between staff and students and report that students in many classes were complimentary about the positive and helpful attitudes of staff. But, in a minority of cases, lecturers were "too relaxed" about students' behaviour and performance.

A number of the full-time and a few part-time classes observed were marked by disturbing levels of unpunctuality and absenteeism, which appeared to be accepted by tutors, and the classes themselves, with little comment", the report says.

And the Inspectorate found examples of assignments on both full and part-time courses with "surprisingly low standards of presentation, understanding and writing". Some of these were marked carelessly, sometimes too generously.

The Inspectorate suggest that these lapses of control may be linked with the poor examination results and high wastage rates on some courses, such as a part-time BEC higher national certificate/diploma in public administration and police studies.

Copies of the report available from: The Education Department, Welsh Office, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NQ.

Curriculum needs

Parkview Junior School, Helston, Cornwall lays a good foundation in language and numeracy, but other parts of the curriculum are under-developed, the Inspectorate says.

In art and craft, geography and science particularly there is little progression in the work from one year to the next and the children's attainments are limited.

The process of producing a more coordinated and balanced curriculum could be helped if attention was given to assessing and recording the work carried in each class, and if fuller records were kept on children's progress.

One school that had succeeded in expanding and developing its curriculum in recent years was The Moss Primary School, Bolton, with health education and a systematic programme of junior science being the latest additions.

This had not been at the expense of literacy and numeracy. "A commendable feature of the work is the attempt to link mathematics and language in the consideration of everyday problems," says the Inspectorate.

A report on Gilbert Colvin JMI School, Redbridge was also published this week.

## Artificial jobs warning

Liverpool's policy of no compulsory redundancy could mean that hundreds of teachers may be given artificial jobs when the school system is reorganised, a city councillor warned this week.

Mr Ernest Pine, a Conservative councillor, was commenting on the wider implications of the case of Mr Brian Birchall, a college lecturer who was paid £4,000 for only 37 hours' work in the last four years.

Mr Pine, who brought the case to the attention of the city council, called for an investigation, and making various allegations about irregularities in the appointment and about over-payment.

Mr Birchall, who supports an inquiry into his case, was appointed as a lecturer in performing arts at I M Mersa College, Liverpool in 1979. Six days after he started he was suspended on full pay for "professional misconduct". A disciplinary hearing found in the morning, but he was not reinstated until July 1981. Instead he was made redundant, but he was given a year's salary and a year to retire. To May this year Labour took control of the city and decided a no-redundancies rule, as a result of which Mr Birchall was re-appointed to his present job as a lecturer at the college.

## FE communication courses praised

## HMI reports

Communication skills courses in further education colleges contribute to students' self-esteem and competence, a team of inspectors reported after visiting 23 colleges last autumn.

Students taking the City and Guilds Communications Skills Certificate and the Business Education Council People and Communication course were better motivated and had produced more work than fellow students who took unassessed courses of liberal and general studies, the report says.

But inspectors thought that work at lower levels made too few demands on some of the students, taking account of their increased motivation.

The report suggests that language specialists should be included in the team of communication teachers as they could influence the methods and materials used. Teachers should be allowed a "base room" suitably equipped for the assessment required by communication courses and timetables should allow teachers to meet formally to discuss effective methods and materials.

Colleges should also develop an overall language policy which could set

## Far-flung placements criticized

A two-year social work course at Plymouth Polytechnic suffers from the fact that many of the placements are far away and few students can afford a car on a grant, the Inspectorate says.

But unlike the highly critical report on sociology and social work teaching at North London Polytechnic published two weeks ago, this has few points of complaint.

Part of the difficulty arose because the course had over-recruited so that placements close to the polytechnic were quickly filled. Another factor was inadequate clerical support which meant that the placement tutor had to spend considerable time on basic clerical duties.

"When finance permits the appointment of one clerical officer with responsibility for all placements required by the faculty should be considered," the Inspectorate concludes.

Otherwise, it praises some of the teaching as examples of "very good practice being given by staff who were keen, knowledgeable and enthusiastic."

## Home-from-home day-care system spreads its wings

by Philip Venning

An experimental day-care system for pre-school children and their parents, which aims to create a "home-from-home" atmosphere, has been so successful that another unit was opened yesterday.

The scheme, pioneered by Sunderland social services department and the Save the Children Fund, uses ordinary houses with a normal layout of rooms, furnished as a home might be. "Deliberately, no attempt was made to have all children's furniture or make the building into a form of 'nursery Noddyland'," says a report on the scheme, published to coincide with the opening of the fourth such centre.

"The atmosphere we wanted to create was one of a welcoming place, a place that was easy for both parents and children to come into and out of." Parents were sometimes frightened by conventional nurseries and day centres, which are very child-oriented. The home from home system also encouraged parents by showing them that whatever they did in the centres they could also do in their own

homes. For children the centres, which are smaller than other pre-school arrangements, were less intimidating because they seemed more familiar. Responsibility for the children is shared by the parents with two nursery courses, two parent helps, and the deputy project director in each house.

No domestic staff are employed, and everyone, children included, helps with cooking, cleaning and maintenance of the centre.

The day is divided into a morning and an afternoon session, each attended by eight children, and with a programme designed to teach speech, self-help, adaptive and physical skills. Each unit takes families only from its own immediate community, but anyone is eligible. This means that the scheme is not limited to problem families. Each parent signs a written contract, the basis of which is to establish "the reason why parents want their children to attend the home from home unit and on this, and this alone, the allocation of time and other services are agreed. Therefore, if the

reason is one of simple socialization the time would be less than if it involved matrimonial breakdown, for example.

During the three years since the first unit opened 200 children have passed through the scheme, and many have made marked improvement in their language development. In addition, they have gained in confidence and in their ability to make firm relationships with adults and with other children.

For parents there had been a real improvement in their self-esteem, with greater commitment to their child's future development.

One of the main reasons for the project's success was that it had no expensive buildings, and could be moved on when demand changed. It offered a low-cost, high-quality solution which other local authorities should consider as a way of expanding their day care provision.

Home from Home obtainable from: Save the Children Fund, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD. Free.



Anonymous borrowers from Brent public libraries have complained that Hergé's trusty boy reporter, Tintin, and his fellow cartoon hero Asterix the Gaul are both sexist and racist. The borough's librarian, Mr John Clark, has ordered a close scrutiny of these children's comic book classics, lest they are likely to give offence and should be removed from the shelves. Tintin was created in 1929, and Tintin books are published in 31 languages, including Serbo-Croatian, Malay, Esperanto, Welsh. The illustration comes from *Blue Lotus*, a Tintin adventure.

## Detention centres possible source of PE teachers

by Richard Garner

Youngsters in detention centres should be drafted in to schools to give physical education lessons to children of primary school age, a conference was told last week.

Dr Alec Dickson, president of Community Service Volunteers, the London-based community service which is celebrating its twenty-first anniversary this year, said it should press Mr Leon Brittan, the Home Secretary, "again and again" to allow such ideas to be given the go ahead "as they don't cost a penny."

Speaking at his organization's annual review day, he added: "Which section of your youth receive more physical education than any other - youngsters in our detention centres. What a marvellous chance we have to put to good use the physical training they receive."

He said that even if only 3 per cent could organize games for young children and become "recreational leaders" for six to ten-year-olds it could help them to step to the "right side of

Dr Dickson added that in the United States youngsters acted as guards on railway carriages. "We've got to confront these youngsters with situations and tasks which make use of their burgeoning machismo and give them a chance to use it in a positive sense."

The conference was also told of a new initiative planned by CSV to help youngsters facing expulsion from school. The organization is planning to take them on as volunteers in community work to enable them to stay on at school.

Mrs Elizabeth Hoodless, CSV director, told the conference that the organization was examining ways in which the Government's Youth Training Scheme could be used to provide youngsters with two years' training.

She said that CSV was negotiating with two firms - Pilkington's, the glass manufacturers in St Helen's, Lancashire, and Whitbread's, the brewers of Nottingham - to provide training for youngsters after their year's training

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Nick Wood reports from Torquay on the Standing Conference of the Regional Examinations Boards

## SEC draws up a 16-plus agenda

The Secondary Examinations Council has mapped out the key issues it will need to resolve before advising on the feasibility of a common exam at 16-plus.

Top of the list are standards – in particular, the role of differentiated papers in the proposed new exams. The cost of switching from O-levels and CSEs to a single exam for all 16-year-olds, the place of teacher assessment and the well-aided points of controversy in the physics, history and English draft criteria, arising from critical comments by Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, are also high on the Council's agenda after its first meeting.

Sir Wilfred Cockerill revealed this to the TES after addressing the annual conference of the CSE boards in which he told them that differentiated papers were not a blanket solution to the

problem of ensuring that the new exams were a fair test for all candidates right across the ability range.

They would be needed in some subjects, but not in others. However, the Secretary of State would need to be convinced that methods of assessment in all subjects paid proper attention to the abilities of candidates, from the most able to the least.

Later, Sir Wilfred said that the maintenance of standards, an essential condition for the introduction of the new system, was intimately bound up with differentiation.

Sir Keith would not give the go-ahead unless he was sure that existing O-level standards would be safeguarded – the Council's key task was to investigate this point and advise him accordingly.

Sir Wilfred told the conference that the SEC would be working closely with

the Joint Council for 16-plus National Certificate (JNC). It would seek its views on how the outstanding matters of controversy along the "critical path" towards the Council's final report to the Secretary of State could best be settled.

Referring later in the row over Sir Keith's desire to keep socio-economic matters out of science exams, he said Council members were divided over its significance. Some believed on important matter of principle was at stake, others that the issue had been blown up out of all proportion and that a compromise could readily be reached.

Dr Peter Andrews, joint chairman of the JNC, clashed publicly with Sir Wilfred over the fate of the criteria should Sir Keith decide to keep the dual system.

Dr Andrews said that the boards would revert to the status quo, de-

veloping their own pilot 16-plus exams in isolation from the criteria.

Sir Wilfred said that if the common system was rejected the criteria – "workable documents that now exist" – should be used to bring GCE and CSE syllabuses closer together.

Dr Andrews was generally "optimistic" about the prospects for a common system. The problems over physics and history would not prove "insuperable hurdles". He also found much to commend in Sir Keith's comments, notably his support for greater emphasis on speaking and listening skills in French syllabuses for less able pupils.

Dr Andrews urged the boards – CSE and GCE – to present a united front to government and to guard their independence. He said they enjoyed great public confidence – a fact that could give them political muscle in meeting

the growing trend towards intervention from the centre.

"One of our greatest attributes is our independence and our independent production of standards in education," Dr Andrews said.

But they also had their weaknesses, notably their "paritism" attitude which led some boards to concentrate on grade A candidates, while the "purists" extolled the merits of CSE mode three.

He also warned the boards that a combination of falling rolls and the end of double entries would cut the numbers of CSE candidates by a third over the next few years and would present them with a major financial problem.

"We won't be helped if the response is a cut-throat war run on strictly entrepreneurial lines with the devil take the hindmost."

## Employers less critical of school-leavers' numeracy

The intense competition for jobs has led to a fall in the number of employers complaining about the mathematical skills of young people, a leading industrialist said this week.

"Employers are less worried about the mathematical ability of young people than they were in the mid-1970s," Dr Peter Winkler, former chairman and managing director of Associated Engineering Developments, said. "It could be there are young people on the dole today who in 1975 would have been unemployed."

Nevertheless, there were no grounds for schools becoming complacent, he said. Big stores and engineering firms still found it hard to recruit numerate youngsters.

Dr Winkler was speaking at the launch of his booklet, *Blueprint for Numeracy*, an employer's guide to the Cockerill report on the teaching of mathematics in schools, which is being sent by the Department of Education to 25,000 employers, about half the national total.

He said he had produced the guide to show employers that the committee, of which he had been a member, had also intended to inform them of the report's findings and recommendations and to identify the steps they

should take to boost youngsters' mathematical attainment.

His guide reminds firms of the shortcomings of many of the selection tests they use in recruiting school-leavers. For instance, tests for would-be engineering apprentices focus on mathematical skills and ignore equally important conceptual skills such as spatial awareness.

The guide urges firms to review their test procedures and to approach schools for help if they are found wanting. It also points out that in recent years, many managers were still ignorant of what happens in school, Dr Winkler added.

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## Polys should form basis of technical education

by Philip Venning

Polytechnics should be taken out of the hands of local education authorities and made national centres of technical learning, Mr Walter Goldsmith, director general of the Institute of Directors, said on Monday.

He told an institute meeting in Glasgow that all levels of the education system had failed industry and young people. A technical education system was needed to allow Britain to compete on equal terms with the skilled workforces of its industrial competitors.

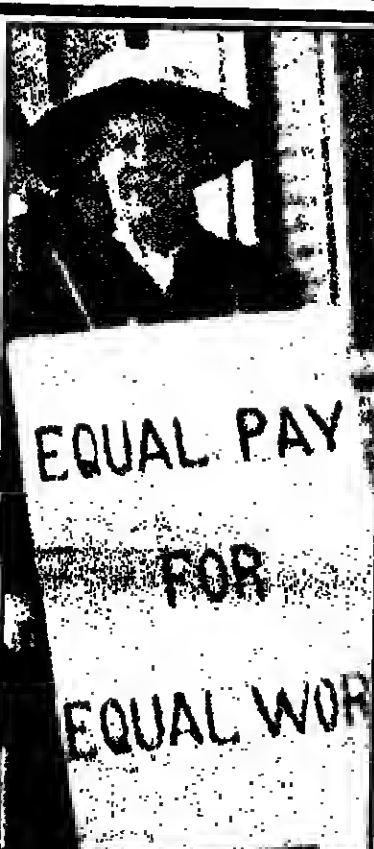
Universities should improve their links with business through such devices as science parks, but they should be primarily centres of academic excellence.

Polytechnics, by contrast, should concentrate on technical learning. Mr Goldsmith said: "Their confused syllabuses, often offering neither one thing nor the other, should be changed."

They had failed to produce a vocational education option because they lacked clear objectives.

Though education was more than just preparation for a job, to play down that role was a great disservice.

Mr Goldsmith added: "Unfortunately it is a sad fact of life that many people choose not to work in industry or commerce because of the ignorant prejudice of their teachers. They have been brainwashed by a misguided belief that industry equals greed, exploitation and industrial pollution, rather than the generation of wealth to support a caring society."



This photograph of a member of the National Federation of Teachers, on strike in Buxton, Derbyshire, during the First World War, is featured in an exhibition at TUC headquarters in Great Russell Street, London, which has preceded the women's day of action taking place tomorrow. Photographs in the exhibition show how women have helped the trade union movement, and how teachers have fought for equal pay for women workers. The National Union of Teachers played a key role in the post-war campaign which finally won a government commitment in 1955 to bring in equal pay in the public services.

## Survey pinpoints isolation of disabled

by Diane Spencer

Britain's 100,000 disabled schoolchildren face a bleak future, says a report published this week by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR).

The report's findings are based on a survey of 2,000 teenagers with physical or sensory handicaps. More than 800 were interviewed, as were 19 specialist careers officers.

The study aimed to discover what the handicapped students could achieve, and to relate abilities to opportunities available.

It reveals that many local authorities do not even know how many disabled young people attend schools in their area, and even less is known about specific disabilities. Many disabled

youngsters in special schools have no contact with able-bodied children, they receive no training in self-care and independence and there are not enough specialist careers officers.

Not only are the children isolated in school, but also in their social lives. The report was commissioned in October, 1981 and is thought to be the largest study of its kind so far.

It recommends that: schools should provide intensive training for independent living; schools and colleges should give information on careers in micro-technology and computing;

further education colleges should consider how they can help handicapped students;

schools should arrange visits for students to sheltered workshops, employment to make them more aware of job options;

studies should be made of approaches adopted by special schools to prepare handicapped people for life after school; and

the issue of "significant living with work", first discussed in the Warnock report, should be the subject of seminars and working parties of teachers, voluntary workers and trade unionists.

*Beyond the School Gate*, Joan Bookis, RADAR, 25 Mortimer Street, London WIN 8AB, £2.25. See School to Work – page 10

## SPORT

## All hands on deck – for press-ups

by Bert Lodge

PE jobs may seem routine at first sight, but here is one that is really going places.

It's aboard the SS *Uganda*. Famous for more than 20 years for carrying schoolchildren on study cruises around the Med, she now carries troops on the Ascension Island-Falklands run. And the Marine Society, the oldest maritime charity in the world, which provides books for ships and finds ships for schools to adopt, is concerned for the welfare of the *Uganda* crew, particularly their physical fitness.

So the society is looking for an expert in what is designated with a fine old-fashioned ring as "PT" – to do a run or two aboard the 17,000 ton P and O troopship and work out a programme of activities which will leave the ship's 170 crew stepping ashore fitter than when they went aboard.

The expert will also be expected to

write a report of the venture for the society and expand this into a consultative paper on how good health can be maintained aboard the 800 vessels still afloat in the Merchant Navy. Anybody who can think no further than a half-hour heave on the windlass need not apply.

Dr Ronald Hope, director of the Marine Society, said this week that the successful scheme would begin in January and be in the South Atlantic for up to four months. Burnham sculls does not apply but an honorarium of £200 a week, plus free messing and cabin plus all out-of-pocket expenses is offered.

Anyone in a school post who is half-ready to spring out of it will find the timing is unfortunate: the final day for handing in notices of leaving at Christmas is only three days away, long before even a short list will have been drawn up. The society plans to

take short-listed candidates down to Southampton late in November when the ship comes home.

Those who have qualified this year and who still have no job will not be troubled by the awkward timing. But Dr Hope has stressed the importance of the advisory report, and this may require more maturity than the newly-qualified can muster.

Mr Peter Lawson, secretary of the Central Council of Physical Recreation which is advising the society on the appointment, thinks a series of graded proficiency tests by which a crew member can measure his progress during a voyage or over a number of voyages may pull off-duty personnel into the gym or sports area.

Applicants should write to the council, enclosing a cv. Address: Mr Peter Lawson, General Secretary, CLP, Francis House, Francis St, London, SW1.

## NOTICEBOARD

### PEOPLE

**SCHOOL APPOINTMENT**  
Mr Dyer to be headmaster of Cabm Hill preparatory school, Belfast from January

**COLLEGE APPOINTMENT**  
Colonel James Mealey to be director of studies, Broadwater College of Banking, London

**UNIVERSITY APPOINTMENTS**  
Professor James Newson-Devis, chairman of the Medical Research Council's Neuroscience Board, Professor P Morris, professor of surgery at Oxford University and Dr Timothy Carter, director of medical services in the Health and Safety Executive, to be members of the Medical Research Council

**ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENT**  
Mrs D Greenwood to be assistant director of education for the Rochester diocesan board of education from January

### CONFERENCES

**NEXT WEEK**  
November 5  
Walsley Research Group conference, Rugby Teachers' Centre, East Warwickshire College of Further Education, Lower Watlington Road, Rugby from 10am. Speakers: Cynthia Dawes, adviser for

mathematics; Philip Wetherill, unit for Traveller Children, Carolyn Steadman, Schools Council; and Jim Campbell, Institute of Education, University of Warwick. Details from Mike Robinson, 7 Beechwood Avenue, Bute, Hinkley, Leics LE10 2HD.

**FORTHCOMING**  
November 15-17  
Girls' Schools Association annual conference in Harrogate. Baines Platt and Sir Keith Joseph to address the public sessions. Details from the Independent Schools Information Service, 56 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6AH. Tel 01 630 8795.

**November 16**  
Association of Polytechnic Teachers one-day conference on *The Future of Diplomas in Higher Education* at the Polytechnic of Central London, Marylebone Road. Details from the Chief Executive, Association of Polytechnic Teachers, 27 Elphinstone Road, Southsea, Hants.

**November 21-24**  
Castle Priory College will be running a creative activities workshop for teachers, nurses, care staff, therapists, helpers and parents working with handicapped groups and individuals. There will be a programme of art, craft and music activities. Details and application forms from the Principal, Castle Priory College, Thames Street, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 0HE.

**November 22**  
National Association of Head Teachers one-day conference on *The Spoken Word* at the Royal Commonwealth Society, Main speakers: Jack Delgish, Christabel Burniston, and John Edwards. Details from Mrs J Huggins, Administrative Assistant, NAHT, Holly House, 6 Peddock Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1RG.



## Call for peace studies adviser

by Richard Garner

Every local education authority should appoint an adviser to help schools promote peace education, says a paper to be presented to a conference on disarmament next month.

The paper, prepared by Teachers for Peace for the conference in London on November 12 and 13, urges l.e.s.s. to provide resources for in-service training and research in peace education. It also calls on them to appoint advisers with responsibility for helping teachers assess their teaching on peace education.

It also proposes setting up special working parties to look at specific subjects, particularly history and religious education, but including sports and careers advice.

Meanwhile, representatives from teachers' unions joined the mass Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament de-

monstration in London at the weekend. Several branches of the National Union of Teachers – including the Inner London Teachers' Association and teachers from Pimlico School – brought their banners to the demonstration (picture above). The college lecturers' union, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, was also represented.

However, more than 200 academics have signed an open letter, condemning the methods used by those campaigning for nuclear disarmament. It accuses CND of being selective in its use of facts.

Its signatories include Baroness Cox and Dr John Marks, of the Centre for Policy Studies, and a number of prominent names from the world of science, medicine and the law.

## Turning on the teaching tap

Some pupils may leave school with no other skills, and sometimes these skills have even been worsened, Mr Peter Newson, chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality told a meeting last week.

Mr Newson, the former education officer of the Inner London Education Authority, likened education to a kettle left on under a running tap (the kettle being the child in his metaphor). "Think of the flow of documents that come from the Department of Education, education authorities, local education authorities. Then consider the day in a school," he told

the College of Preceptors. "All over the country, pupils are having the tap of instruction turned on and the results poured over them. The effect of all this is disappointing. Despite all the outpourings, it is possible to go into classrooms and see far too little that has changed for the better since the 1930s."

"The world of education is full of people, from Secretaries of State to the newest recruit in the classroom, buying themselves at the tap before taking the elementary precaution of ensuring that the lid is removed from the kettle," he said.

## EVENTS

**October 31**  
Opening of inaugural lecture by Professor Geoffrey Dickens, of University of Sheffield Centre for Reformation Studies. The centre will present lectures, courses, exhibitions in the field of Reformation and Renaissance studies. Further details from Emeritus Professor James Alkison at the centre.

**November 3**  
Secondary Education for All in the 1980s: the Challenge to the Comprehensive School – Professor Brian Simon will give the Raymond King Memorial Lecture at 6.30pm in the Waterloo Room, the Royal Festival Hall. Admission free.

**November 5**  
Jack Jones will deliver the Will Harvey Memorial Lecture, *Education for the Over-Fifties* at Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London WC1 at 3pm. Admission free.

**November 10**  
Sir Bernard Lovell will deliver an illustrated public lecture, *To See or to Perish*, a personal account of our modern view of the universe at 7.30pm at Hatfield Polytechnic. Admission by ticket only (£1).

**October 28-November 20**  
Children's Art of the Commonwealth Textile Exhibition at the Commonwealth Institute Art Gallery, Kensington High Street, London W8. Open Monday-Friday, 10am-5.30pm. Sundays 2pm-5pm.

### COMPETITIONS

**The Times**  
The Times Classroom Computer Competition no 7: entry form and details in *The Times*, October 25.

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

**Language Monthly**, a new magazine for linguists and translators. Available on subscription from Praetorius Ltd, 30 Clarendon Street, Nottingham NG1 5HQ (£12 a year).

**The Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health** has produced an education pack, *Mental Illness – what's it all about?* for 12 to 15-year-olds. The basic booklet for pupils includes definitions of mental health, illness and handicap; attitudes to mental illness, treatments and the different caring professions involved; and ways to help ourselves and others cope with difficult times. Teachers' notes give fuller background to these topics and information on further resources. Available from Bascon House, 84 University Street, Belfast BT7 1HE.

**A practical guide to the conservation of wildlife in Britain's learned countryside** has been produced by Cheshire College of Agriculture. *The Wildlife and Landscape Management Plan Review 1976-1981* is useful with sixth-formers and in rural studies departments. Available at £4 from the Weir, Reseach Outdoor Education Centre, Cheshire College of Agriculture, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6DF.

**MUSIC IN THE COMMUNITY**  
Help the Aged education department would like to contact teachers, schools or parents with experience of music in the community. They are particularly interested in projects involving infant classes and old people. Please contact Joanna Borne, Education Director, Help the Aged, 31 St Paul's Road, London N1.

## Bristol finds fault in HMI

Bristol Polytechnic has hit back at a damning report on the work of its engineering department which was published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in the summer (TES, August 5). It says the report, which was published 18 months after the inspection, was out of date and full of inaccuracies.

The report's chief criticisms were that the department had a "static and ageing" teaching force who taught in a boring way, did little of their own research and did not maintain up-to-date industrial contacts. Demand for part-time degree courses was inadequate, students' qualifications low and performance on the full-time degree course – technology with industrial studies – gave "cause for extreme alarm".

The inspectors also found the accommodation – on a site shared with Brunel Technical College – "unsatisfactory and wholly unsuitable for undergraduate teaching".

But the polytechnic's response points out that several new appointments have been made since the inspectors' visit, with an emphasis on recruitment from industry. Many of the new staff have research interests covering a wide range of topics, it says. Both intake and performance on the technology with industrial studies course had improved. The accommodation problem would be solved when the department moves into new, purpose-built buildings in 1985.

## A simple test for music teachers and their students...

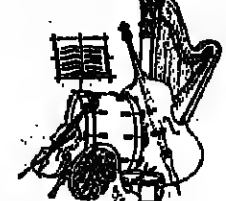
### Questions:

1. Complete the following: "The sun it is rising to welcome the day, with a hey ho ....."
2. How do you find out about the latest educational developments in musical instruments?
3. How do you see a magnificent exhibition of early musical instruments and meet their makers?
4. What do you do to meet music and music book publishers in a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere?
5. How do you find the largest collection of damaged musical instruments in the world?
6. What is the best way of spending a day amongst musicians and music?
7. How best can you try out and compare the widest range of musical instruments – brass – woodwind – percussion – strings – pianos – classical guitars – electronic keyboards and meet the people who make and sell them?

## The London Music Fair

Incorporating the Sixth Exhibition of

EARLY MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS and the first CLASSICAL MUSIC EXHIBITION



THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL HALLS Westminster, London SW1.

FRI/SAT/SUN, 18/19/20 November  
Doors open 10.00 am.  
Admission to both exhibitions only £1.00 (Under 14/OAPs 50p)

Presented in association with the Early Musical Instrument Makers Association and Classical Music magazine.

## The TES Guide to the YTS

The new Youth Training Scheme officially began operating in April 1983 but despite wide publicity most people in education and industry still have only a hazy idea of how it will work.

Who will get into the programme and what will it do for them? How will it affect schools and colleges? What is the real significance of the scheme for education, industry and, most important of all, the young themselves?

The TES Guide to the YTS attempts to sum up the facts and to set out how the scheme will actually work when, towards the end of this year, it comes into full operation. The Guide is available in reprint form price 25p including postage within the UK.

Please direct your enquiries to:  
Frances Goddard  
The Times Supplements  
Priory House, St John's Lane  
London EC1M 3JX







## OVERSEAS

# Three tiers for a new path to top jobs

## UNITED STATES

Peter David reports on the crisis for careers and curriculum

The end of summer in the United States coincided with the end of the recent spate of national reports calling for educational reform, leaving the politicians in Washington without a very clear idea of what to do next.

To fill the vacuum, Mr Terrell Bell, the Education Secretary, has called for a "national forum" on education to be staged in December. More than a thousand leading educational figures would attend the meeting in Indianapolis and discuss what should be done to follow up the recommendations in the spring report by the Presidential commission on national excellence.

Not to be outdone, Congress is mulling over an almost identical idea. Plans for a national "summit" meeting on education are moving through the Senate and the House of Representatives, despite complaints from the Reagan Administration that two major conferences are unnecessary.

But from the point of view of the schools themselves, what happens next at a national government level is not particularly important. While the reports published during the summer have created a national consensus about the crisis in education, most of the remedies suggested will have to be implemented by individual states and districts rather than by the Federal Government.

Many of the remedies — such as changes in the way teachers are paid — are the responsibility of the states.

In Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Utah, Illinois and Wisconsin, major reforms have been proposed. In Utah a commission on excellence staffed by parents, teachers and state education officials has drafted a proposal that would bring in a new career structure for teachers and strengthen the core curriculum.

The new career structure would create a three-tier ladder for teachers. First, new entrants to the profession would spend three years as probationary "apprentice teachers", with a base salary of about \$17,500 (£10,000) some \$4,000 more than the present average. A second tier of "professional teachers" would take on greater responsibilities and receive salaries of at least \$24,000. Finally a small number of "teacher leaders" picked by special talent-spotting committees, would be able to earn up to \$40,000.

Echoing a key recommendation in the recent Carnegie report on high schools, the Utah commission recommends freeing teachers from petty administrative tasks and giving them more time to concentrate on basic subjects.

In Wisconsin, a task force on teaching and teacher training has come up with almost identical recommendations. The committee would raise starting salaries from \$13,400 to \$20,000 and introduce a voluntary merit pay plan.

All Wisconsin teachers would be required to spend a probationary year before becoming professional teachers. Later, professional teachers with special competence could become "career teachers" or teacher specialists.

Other recommendations in the Wisconsin report include strengthening in-service teacher training, introducing stricter requirements for intending teachers and devising financial incentives for bright school-leavers

interested in a teaching career.

In Arkansas, a commission chaired by the wife of the state governor is believed to be poised to issue a report calling for radical changes in the shape of the state's school districts and demanding, for the first time, that all children attend kindergarten.

The commission will also suggest imposing tougher requirements for high school graduation and extending the present compulsory education ages of 7 to 15 years to 16 to 18. Teachers' pay would be raised to an average of around \$18,000.

An educational task force in Indiana has told the governor that the state's present system, under which the state superintendent is an elected politician, should be replaced by a state board of education which will appoint a professional superintendent.

The task force also recommends raising the state's education spending so that school districts can offer bonuses to good teachers and increase the school year from its present 175 days to 190 days by the end of the decade.

The state superintendent in Illinois has proposed a number of controversial reforms including lengthening the school day from five to seven hours and raising from 16 to 18 the age at which children can leave school without their parents' permission. Five hours a day would be earmarked for a core curriculum of maths, science, English, social studies and a foreign language.

In Florida, the state governor has had to postpone introduction of a controversial plan to raise the quality of teaching by making teachers take competency exams at intervals of 5-15 years. The plan has been opposed by teachers' unions and some school districts claim that it would be the first of its kind, and might discourage new entrants to teaching.

## 'Vive la différence' offer from the Left

## FRANCE

Anne Corbett on state proposals for the private sector.

Out in the provinces the commune is often still fighting the hundred years educational war with the *curé*. The stories filter through of Don Camillo-like denials in which the Church gives the municipality land for the longed-for sports hall in return for a nice new school.

But although the troops may still be skirmishing, the generals are back in their tents, studying the terms of a peace treaty.

The French Government's proposals on private education have at last been made public, the fruit of endless discussions and 15 drafts since the eventual failure of M Alsini Savary, Minister of Education, to reach agreement on the basis of a shorter, more precise document presented last December (TES January 14).

M Savary is asking the state and those representing the private sector under contract to agree in principle within a month to his three-year programme of negotiations and legislation. His proposals are based on three principles: equality of educational opportunity for pupils, freedom of conscience for teachers and pupils, and a choice of schooling for all. The aim would be to establish definitively a system of education which is "national but not uniform".

The Government would want by the end of the next school year to resolve what it calls management problems: the overlap in provision between the

state and private sector, the terms on which local authorities provide funding, the status of teachers and non-teaching staff and the place of religious teaching in the school timetable.

There is a second set of problems which would raise issues of principle — for example, procedures for naming the head of a private establishment, and working out how choice could operate.

A third set of problems — "the most delicate", said the statement — would define the relationship between state, local authorities and establishments, within the framework of the Government's decentralization programme, the status of teachers in the private sector who do not opt for tenure, and forms of public control.

These proposals are a far cry from the apparent simplicity of the Mitterrand election commitment to "a unified public and secular system of education". They even avoid the word that the Catholics most fear, "integration" (translated as nationalization).

But it is not clear that the French Government ever thought in terms of their own clerical supporters wishing on them — to cut off private schools, which are 90 per cent Catholic, from the state aid which most have had on generous terms since 1959.

It would have been difficult in practical terms. These schools take 10 per cent of the school population — more than two million of the 12 million total. It would have been difficult in terms of public opinion: 70 per cent favour the continued existence of an alternative to the state, the schools under contract having successfully sold themselves, particularly since 1982, as the sector which cares about pupils' havens of moral values and also as educationally flexible.

But a strategy of isolation as opposed to negotiation would also have been contrary to the left-wing ideology which favours breaking the state mould in order to encourage more diversity and more individual initiative, and which looks to decentralization and greater institutional autonomy to provide a framework.

Whatever the outcome of the Senate proposals — and the list of failures is long — they deserve a place in the war and as an equally unprecedented initiative of the Left to end the school war and as an equally unprecedented conversion on the part of the French Government to educational diversity.

## LETTERS

## An all-consuming category in DES statistics

So I wonder whether fellow contributors to the compilation of DES statistics returns, notably Form 7d, share my concern as they post their single return of school leavers over the last academic year?

From my own school 24 case histories will be returned, of these five are currently engaged on Youth Training Scheme programmes. I was surprised to find no appropriate place on Form 7d in which to record the destination of these leavers, including the polytechnic. On checking with an official, I was advised to include them all in the following category:

"If the leaver's destination is employment, apprenticeship, or any other known destination, not listed above, and no further full-time education is envisaged before November 1984 please put X in this box. Please include those leavers known to be looking for employment."

At the very least, a valuable source of information about the extent of

unemployment among 16 to 19-year-olds and the take-up of YTS has been overlooked.

The chief concern of this form is to acquire information as to the qualifications and courses to be followed by students entering further and higher education. Here again, however, the form fails to take account of an increasing number of ex-students who fully intend improving their grade performance at A level in the hope of taking up university and polytechnic places in October 1984. They, too, are swallowed up in the category already indicated.

Perhaps those responsible do not wish to know the hard facts of unemployment, the take-up of YTS or the fate of 18-year-olds squeezed out of higher education places?

PATRICIA COLLINS  
Glebe Villa  
4 Glebe Street  
Beeston  
Nottingham

## CDT for girls

Sir — In recent weeks we have seen major steps forward in the realization of equal opportunities for girls. In CDT a particular example of this has been the "blue book", *Equal Opportunities in Craft, Design and Technology*, published by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

The book is quite well presented and contains relevant information and practical suggestions. However, discrimination can take many forms, and certainly any secondary school which so arranges its curriculum that some pupils are deprived of CDT (perhaps in the third year) is in my opinion guilty of discrimination of an equal magnitude.

George Hicks so rightly pointed to this in his recent article, "Infant phenomenon" (TES, October 7), when he stated the importance of the contribution of CDT to the education of all pupils, irrespective of age, sex or ability.

In Berkshire, we have now established a working party of teachers to promote equality of opportunity for all pupils in CDT.

IAN PEARSON  
41 Haver Road  
Chesham  
Bucks

## Manpower model

Sir — Jack Cross (TES, October 14) described developments in Surrey in connection with the curriculum.

Clearly it was a fair and balanced description of this project. However, I think it is necessary to comment on his paragraph in which he suggests that I could predict exact curriculum changes that would follow the introduction of the model. This, of course, is not possible, but the case for such a prediction would be the case.

Such a prediction would ignore the role of teachers, their philosophy and responsibility, their philosophy and responsibility of local needs.

I think that Mr Cross, in this paragraph, was referring to my discussion of the possibility of further development in the use of computerized curriculum planning that is the construction of a series of appropriate curriculum

## Grade distinction

Sir — Mr Laurie Smith's article on A level grading ("The cruel C", TES, October 7) certainly reflects a growing concern among teachers. One wonders indeed whether a more radical solution may not be needed — that of reducing the pass grades at A level to A, B, C, only.

Comparing A level results with what one knows of pupils' performances through two years in the sixth form, one is drawn towards the conclusion that, while the A and O/F grades are in general proportionately reasonable enough, the B/C and D/E grades are not, with some adjustment, be contained in that attempts at finer differentiation seem often to be misleading and unjust.

This is not a criticism of A levels as such, but accepting the realities of the situation by a move of this kind would clearly require changes, above all in the way universities select candidates and make offers. However, if such institutions were compelled to take this particular bull by the horns, and rely less heavily on often illusory grade distinctions (especially given the obvious variations of standard between boards), there would be considerable gains all round.

DAVID MATTHEWS  
Head of modern languages  
Malvern College  
Worcestershire

## UCL goes Dutch

Sir — In his "Careers Diary" (TES, October 7), Brian Heap advises UCL candidates that courses in Dutch are being withdrawn at Bedford College London.

What does not make clear is that these courses are now being taught at the University of London.

don, the staff of the department of Dutch at Bedford College have transferred to UCL. The BA course in Dutch language and literature at UCL is the only one of its kind in Britain and the college is accepting applications through the UCAS for 1984 entry.

N C F CLEWLEY  
Information Officer  
University College London  
Gower Street, WC1E 6BT

## THE BRITISH COUNCIL

## International Specialist Courses

Teaching Practice and Assessment for ELT  
25 March - 6 April 1984 in London

The course will address itself to issues concerning the place of teaching practice on initial or in-service training courses for teachers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and the assessment and evaluation of this element. Emphasis will be placed not only on current practice in ESOL but also on recent developments and research in general and foreign language programmes of teacher training in Britain.

The Director of Studies will be Kan Cripwell, Lecturer in Education in the Department of English for Speakers of Other Languages at the University of London Institute of Education.

The course is designed for teacher trainers as well as in-service teachers. Selection will be based on applicants' present or future commitments to the training of ESOL teachers. Fee £595 (Residential), £345 (Non-residential).

Communicative Activities in ELT: Methodology and Materials  
25 March - 6 April 1984 in Manchester

The course will consider communicative activities from a number of viewpoints. In particular methodology and materials. As well as information about latest developments there will be demonstration of methods and materials and opportunities for members to make materials and practice using them.

The Director of Studies will be Bob Jorden of the Department of Education, University of Manchester.

The course is designed for teacher educators at primary or secondary level concerned with ELT and/or involved in materials production in ELT.

Fee £595 (Residential), £345 (Non-residential).

The Management and Administration of Public Examinations  
1 - 13 April 1984 in Southampton

The basic aim of the course is to enable senior staff connected with the administration of public examinations, mainly at secondary level, in different parts of the world to bring themselves up to date with current developments in respect of their management and organisation.

The Director of Studies will be Henry G Meeintosh, Secretary to the Southern Regional Examinations Board for the Certificate of Secondary Education, Southampton.

The course is intended for experienced staff of public examining agencies, ministry or department of education officials with responsibility for the construction and administration of public examinations at secondary level or above, and senior government servants in countries considering establishing their own examinations.

Fee £530 (Residential), £310 (Non-residential).

Training of In-Service Teacher Trainers for ELT:  
An International Seminar

1 - 13 April 1984 in Lancaster

The course aims to give members an opportunity to exchange information about current practice and issues arising from their local circumstances and to provide information on current thinking in the United Kingdom on the professional development of serving teachers.

The Director of Studies will be Greta K Seeley, a teaching fellow in the Institute of English Language Education at the University of Lancaster.

The course is intended for teacher educators, Ministry of Education staff responsible for curriculum development and inspectors/advisers working with teachers in schools.

Fee £595 (Residential), £345 (Non-residential).

Modern Developments in the Teaching of English Literature  
1 - 13 April 1984 in Aberdeen

The aim of the course is to review recent approaches to the study of English Literature at university and college level, and to assess contemporary developments in related teaching strategies.

The Director of Studies will be Dr Gréme Roberts, Lecturer in English at the University of Aberdeen.

Course members should be either teachers of English literature at advanced level in tertiary institutions or teacher trainers and specialists engaged in curriculum development. It is not intended for secondary school teachers of English language or literature.

Fee £480 (Residential), £280 (Non-residential).

Graded Objectives and Tests for English as a Foreign Language  
2 - 14 April 1984 in York

The introduction of graded objectives and tests along communicative lines has transformed foreign language teaching in those British schools which have adopted the scheme. The course aims to pass on by means of lectures and seminars information on the background to graded objectives and tests. The emphasis, however, will be on the workshop in which participants will be helped to plan the introduction of a scheme of graded objectives and tests in their own country.

The Director of Studies will be Michael Buckley of the Language Teaching Centre at the University of York.

The course is intended for curriculum and syllabus developers, examiners, evaluators, heads of department in schools, advisers, inspectors and teacher educators.

Fee £595 (Residential), £345 (Non-residential).

Further information and application forms can be obtained from your local overseas Representative of The British Council or from Courses Department, The British Council, 65 Davies Street, London W1Y 2AA. Please quote reference TES/84.

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NEW

## Tortured cry for help

EL SALVADOR

Hilary Wilce talks to a survivor of official violence.

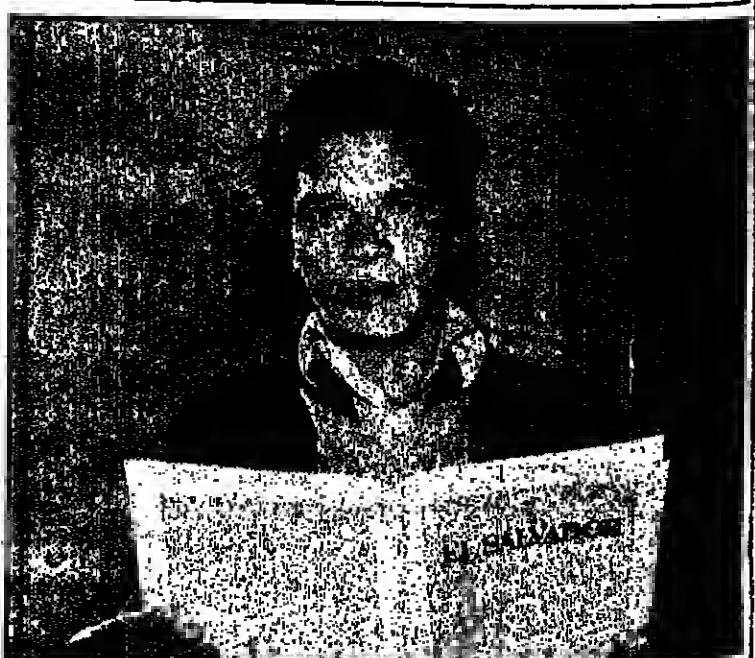
British teachers are being asked for money to help rebuild schools in troubled El Salvador as news reaches this country of the 315th teacher to be killed there since 1981.

Mano Aguilera Gutierrez, who was killed on September 29, was one of three teachers known to have been assassinated last month. Meanwhile 70 teachers remain unaccounted for, on the list of "disappeared".

Against a background of appalling violence in El Salvador the National Union of Teachers is launching its "A school for El Salvador" project. Both its local teacher associations and schools will be asked to raise funds to build new schools in the devastated country and this week the national executive voted to launch the project with £300.

The Salvadorean teachers' union, ANDES 21 June, estimates that £115,000 will pay for 57 simple schools, for one year in what it terms "the liberated zones", mainly in the north of the country.

Helping to launch the campaign in Britain last week was Rafael Antonio Carías, European representative of the Salvadorean union, whose own experience bears testimony to the



Rafael Carías... spreading the word about violence

terrible conditions many teachers have had to face.

"He was abducted from his home one Saturday and was not traced to a prison for eight days. In jail he was interrogated and badly tortured for over two years before finally being released last April.

Outside, fears of continuing persecution led him to take shelter in the Mexican Embassy for two months before finally fleeing to Belgium. Rafael Carías, bearing a deep scar beneath one eye and acid burns on his body from his prison ordeal, is anxious to tell teachers around the world of conditions in his country.

His message to teachers in Britain is that 1,500 schools in El Salvador have been closed, and that 4,000 teachers have been forced to take exile. Illiteracy rates can now be anything up to 64 per cent in the urban areas, and 84 per cent in the rural areas.

"The more we can pass on this information, the more it might help to force the government to do something about education," he says.

ANDES 21 June, which claims 15,000 members among El Salvador's 30,000 teachers, has been diligent in relating details about the violence its members have suffered over recent years at the hands of government security forces or street death squads.

Teachers have been prime targets, he says, because in many areas of what is a poor and undeveloped country, they are automatically community leaders. They also see at first hand the effects on their pupils of poverty and repression, and have a role in encouraging free-thinking.

In 1981 the union circulated a detailed list of the killings of 124 teachers in the country, and since then has continued to catalogue and describe the continuing atrocities.



## LETTERS

## Going to law

Sir - May I add to your report (TES October 14) from Sweden. "Union loses test case over sucking" (Lärarförbundet (SL) the Swedish NUT) is deliberately using the law to defend its members' security of tenure.

Earlier this year, local authorities sought to terminate some 1,000 posts (full and part-time). To date, about 700 posts have been saved by local union action checking that grant-aided resources have been fully used. Eight local authorities have been taken to the labour court.

In the Ornskoldsvik case in your report, the right of the authority to terminate 14 class teacher posts was upheld. On the other hand, the court did not pronounce on the essential question posed by the union, namely the way in which a local authority may use central government grants calculated on current laws and regulations.

The union is now seeking discussions with the National Board of Education, whose constitutional duty it is to administer those laws and regulations. To quote SL's journal (October 6): "SL has lost the first case. That we must accept. But we can never accept that our members' security of appointment is to depend on the arbitrary use by local authorities of central government (specific) grant."

Questions about relationships between central and local government and the legal basis of agreements freely negotiated, currently debated in England, have interesting parallels in other countries.

LEON BOUCHER  
Chester College  
Chichester Road  
Chester

## Primary interest

Sir - As consultant to the new primary social studies curriculum project in Singapore, I was particularly interested in your feature on the republic's future policy for children of high ability (TES October 14). The vigour and pace of curriculum development in Singapore is a phenomenon that merits our close attention.

The new primary social studies curriculum will be followed, in one form or another, by almost all children between 9 and 12. It is not the curriculum itself, but the examination at 12, in which social studies will be limited to the ablest pupils. Of course, this raises other questions; but at least social studies will be firmly embedded in the primary curriculum for the great majority of children in Singapore. I wonder whether as much could be said about the primary curriculum in England and Wales.

ALAN BLYTH  
University of Liverpool  
19-23 Abercromby Square  
Liverpool

Letters for publication should be kept as brief as possible and typed on one side of the paper only. The Editor reserves the right to cut or amend them.

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## Segregation by selection - recipe for injustice

Sir - Selection, though inaccurate and often irrelevant, is an aspect only of the true vice of the grammar school system, namely, segregation. By intellectual attainment as much as by colour, creed, class or sex, segregation unfailingly produces lack of opportunity on the one hand and guilt, thinly covered by prejudice, on the other. "Separate but Equal" is always a recipe for a social injustice which finally becomes intolerable. Hence the comprehensives.

The essential gift of a comprehensive to its pupils is opportunity for

everyone; which is perfectly compatible with old-fashioned virtues like manners, discipline and hard work. Even a "bad" comprehensive, if such there be, is potentially a good one; whereas even a good grammar school prevents absolutely the proper education of all; and can only be preferred by those who seek a proper education only for some.

PHILIP OAKSHOTT

Head

Thornden School

Chandler's Ford

Hampshire



Dorothy Dakin: bold headmistress



Christopher Price: inaccurate picture

## Introducing Miss Dakin...

Sir - A Mr Price, to borrow his style (TES, October 17) has had a go at re-educating Miss Dakin of ISIS.

Introduction, for I would love her. But if he would rather wallow on in ignorance and prejudice, let me tell him that dear old Dorothy was not headmistress of an academic hot-house for young ladies of gentle birth, but of one where there was a high proportion of girls from single-parent homes, where hardship was more the rule than the exception and compassion, as well as economic skills, was in high demand.

Miss Dakin is built like a frigate and has the salty manner of one of Nelson's petty officers. As head, she was just as likely to be found playing dominoes with parents who were dockyard workers or plumbers as with those who worked with clean hands. By the way, do I now recall Mr Price? Is he the Mr Price who sent his daughter to Westminster?

Of course, when you have a bad case, aim to be offensive, add a few personalities and you can tear off a

column in no time. And add a few wild inaccuracies. The ISIS turnover is not half a million but a quarter of a million. Parents abroad were contributing more than £20m a year to the British balance of payments when Tim Devlin was in knickerbockers.

But grossly inaccurate or speculatively plausible, we need Mr Price in the academic showcase. Without him and Mr Kinnoch there would be no one to keep us on our toes. And let me correct another misnomer of his: independent schools are not really at their best under what he calls a sympathetic government. Our real friends have always been Labour. Over nearly 20 years Labour governments and people like Mr Price have kept private schools full. I cannot conceive of one single benefit received from the Tories. So let's have them back, with safe seats for Mr Price and my old public school mate Tony Benn as soon as possible.

D R C ENGLEHEART  
Moffatt School  
Bewdley  
Worcestershire

## Fine distinction

Sir - I note Ms Beverley Shaw (TES, October 14) questioned whether comprehensives have abolished selection because:

- 1 Children are still selected for entry by administrators (from neighbourhood leader primaries etc).
- 2 Most children are banded, set or streamed by the age of 13.
- 3 Teachers distinguish between able, average and less able within mixed ability classes.

I would like to make the following observations.

- A single national comprehensive school is clearly impracticable so allocation to a school (by catchment areas/neighbourhood, some degree of parental choice etc) is necessary - but that is not the same as selection by ability.
- I believe fervently in both the equal worth of all pupils and the need to educate according to age, aptitude and ability. Too often it is suggested we treat all pupils as if they were the same and are charged with mediocre uniformity. Yet in practice compre-

hensive schools are and must be fully aware of individual differences - hence our flexibility and variety of curriculum, teaching strategies, pupil groupings etc. "Selective" are not - nor do we aspire to be "grammar schools" for all (any more than "sec mods" for all). Ms Shaw's final comment is truly astounding and worthy of inclusion in the "No Comment" section of your journal. "And there is evidence that the average and the less able within mixed ability classes." An awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses is basic to all effective teaching irrespective of pupil grouping. In a mixed ability situation a lack of such awareness would be utterly disastrous.

I truly hope I have misunderstood the comments from a member of the School of Education, Durham.

J A L WELLS

Head

Pool School

Redruth

Cornwall

## Re-training need

Sir - I feel I must reply to the letter from Mr B. R. Grace, principal of Barnfield College, Luton (TES, October 14).

Over the past three years and recently with the advent of the YTS and NTVEI the curriculum, teaching and learning methods have so changed and are changing that some form of teacher training and updating is absolutely necessary.

Gone are the days when specialists in law, accountancy and government etc could get by on imparting their knowledge to, on the whole, motivated students of post-compulsory schooling age.

With the advent of BEC and TEC (BTEC) subject specialists have had to learn down to emerge into integrated modular approaches with an emphasis upon student-centred learning rather than a tutor "chalk and talk" approach.

Knowledge of individual subject areas is now not nearly enough to cope with and adjust to the learning approaches necessary to satisfy BTEC

aims and objectives. Since September this year the college has an intake of more than 100 YTS students/trainees covering a wide range of abilities and aptitudes.

YTS students need to attain skills in basic core areas, both specific and generic and to attain facilities to solve problems related to the world of work and non work.

Added to this are areas such as guidance and counselling, together with assessment skills that are needed by teachers.

To cope with and adjust to the BTEC philosophy and the objectives of the YTS and NTVEI it is necessary for teachers to gain the necessary skills which can only be derived from "modern" teacher training methods and in course training.

Unfortunately both the local education authority and the college authorities have yet to grasp this; as finance for this area is such a low priority.

T H BOURNETT  
NATFHE branch secretary  
Barnfield College  
New Bedford Road  
Luton

## Do unto others...

Sir - Whatever the teachers' unions disagree about, they seem unanimous that members should not make reports critical of their colleagues without at the same time acquainting the people concerned with the nature of the criticisms.

I have never seen any comparable concern that references critical of pupils should be sent by the pupils concerned before they go to the

prospective employer/admission tutor.

When completing UCCA reports we are writing of people who within a few months will be legally adult, if they are not so already. Why do we not accord them the same rights that we expect for ourselves?

R D BEALE  
2nd Master  
The Grammar School  
Princess Elizabeth Way  
Cheltenham



## Cash aid

Sir - I hope I may be permitted, through the medium of your correspondence columns, to request the support of teachers and other educationalists who are interested in promoting the teaching of money sense and money management in schools and colleges.

The North West Region Education in Money Management Association has built up, during the past few years, a comprehensive data bank of teaching materials which can be supplied to schools and colleges by commercial financial organizations and consumer organizations.

My association now wishes to incorporate into its data bank examples of money management materials produced by local education authorities, teacher working groups and individual

teachers. The main purpose of this letter is to invite professional colleagues who have produced such materials for use in schools and colleges to contact us.

Any advisory staffs, school staffs or individual teachers who are prepared to cooperate with my association in this project should contact the Education and Training Centre, Hind Hill Street, Heywood, Rochdale, Greater Manchester (tel: Heywood 624923).

There is not, at present, any national money management organization to coordinate the work of regional and local associations; hence my appeal through your correspondence columns.

GEORGE GRACE  
Chairman, NWMMA  
17 Palm Court Avenue  
Brighton, BN1 1JH

## FEATURES

## TESTING TALK

As the exam boards prepare to include oral English tests in the new 16 plus exams, Margaret MacLure and Tom Gorman report on the speaking tests pioneered by the Assessment of Performance Unit



Interact with each other rather than the assessor, we hope to minimise some of the unease or anxiety which might arise out of a solitary confrontation with an unfamiliar adult.

Performance can also be affected by the nature of the task they are asked to do. One of our main concerns has been to devise tasks which can be seen as having some genuine communicative purpose or outcome, and which are interesting and enjoyable to carry out. We were particularly keen to avoid setting up tasks which might seem strange or unrelated to the usual purposes for which they use talk; for instance we avoid asking them to give information to somebody who already (and obviously) has that information.

Assessing in pairs helps here as one pupil can show the partner how to play the game just learned, rather than have to display her knowledge to an omniscient assessor who is obviously already "in the know". Similarly, tasks which involve making up or re-telling stories, or re-counting information that has just been listened to, can be done with an audience not previously acquainted with the material.

We do however include some tasks or sub-tasks which involve interaction with the assessor - such as answering questions based on interpretation of tape-recorded material - since this sort of interaction with adults is of course another fairly common experience for pupils, particularly in classrooms.

We do not make the clear-cut distinction which is common in oral assessment between "speaking" tests on the one hand and "listening" tests on the other, with separate batteries of tests for each. Instead we have tried to devise situations in which listening and speaking are integral and reciprocal parts of a total communicative activity.

Each pair usually takes part in three different tasks. The assessors who administer these are also responsible for recording on cassette all the talk produced in the course of the session for subsequent marking and checking, and for giving an initial impression mark in relation to a seven-point scale for the various components of each task. The on-the-spot assessors, who are the only markers to have access to non-verbal aspects of pupils' performance - such as their use of eye-contact and gesture - also give pupils a rating for "orientation to listener": the extent to which they make their speech relevant to a pupil's usual range of communicative activities.

The tasks have been carefully designed to avoid, of these possible effects. One important feature of the administration procedure is the selection of pupils by friendship pairs, or triads, in each pair is randomly selected from the appropriate age-group, and then chooses a partner. For some tasks, two pairs are

taped records are returned to the NFER they are then impression-marked a second time by a different panel of markers. In the 1982 survey each tape was marked twice at this stage. The impression marking is designed to capture markers' rapid, subjective judgments about the relative merits of pupils' performance. We find that there is a high degree of agreement across markers, and the impression marks are used as a basis for generalizations about group performance; for example, to contrast the performance of pupils in different regions of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, or to look at differences in performance between girls and boys.

The patterns of performance which are beginning to emerge from analysis of the impression marks correspond in many cases to those which have also been found in the successive surveys of reading and writing. For instance groups from schools in inner-city areas tend to achieve relatively lower average scores in all three language modes. However, evidence is also starting to emerge which suggests that there are differences between some of the patterns found in reading and writing assessment and those identified in the oracy survey. For instance while girls have consistently been found to perform more effectively on each task included in the writing survey, in the oracy survey girls and boys performed equally well across the whole sample.

In the third stage of marking a randomly selected sample of recordings is assessed in much more detail. The marking schemes developed for each task are designed to give more detailed information about pupils' performance than we can get from their overall marks. We look at sequential structuring of the discourse, lexical and grammatical aspects of the talk, and features such as tempo, pacing and hesitation.

We also look at dimensions of talk which are associated with particular types of activity. In the task which involves sequencing pictures to form a narrative, pupils are assessed for the ways in which they create "events" or "episodes" from the pictures, and for their use of devices which introduce characterisation, suspense and other story-like features into the skeletal sequence of events linking the pictures.

The categories we used were derived from an extensive analysis of large numbers of recorded examples of pupils carrying out each of the tasks, so that the categories would clearly relate to identifiable characteristics of their talk. We consider it to be extremely important that

assessment categories should be based on what 11-year-olds actually do when asked to tell a story or relay instructions, rather than on more abstract notions such as "fluency", "content", "confidence" and so on, which are difficult to define. The analytic marking exercise therefore gives us information about how pupils actually go about carrying out various kinds of communicative tasks. It is used to identify the different sorts of skills which contribute to the overall success or otherwise of speech activities, and tasks. It shows how different strategies and skills can be used to achieve similar interactional ends, and how these components relate to overall pupil performance.

Although it should be stressed that these findings are still tentative at this stage, the analytic marking procedures look as if they will be able to yield valuable insights for teachers and others interested in promoting oracy skills in the classroom. We hope that they will be useful in providing a picture of what 11-year-olds are capable of doing.

The report on the 1982 survey will provide many examples from transcripts of the tape recordings which exemplify those differing skills and strategies pupils may adopt. We hope that teachers will ultimately be able to use our categories and examples as an aid to identifying those aspects of pupils' talk which they might want to focus on for classroom work in oracy.

It is important to stress, however, that the work done for the APU surveys is specifically designed for large scale monitoring. In order to adopt the techniques developed for application by teachers or for use in national examinations at secondary level further developments would be necessary. Nevertheless, certain issues are raised and techniques offered which are relevant to the assessment of spoken language in different settings and for a variety of purposes. Some of the most important of these relate to procedures for soliciting naturalistic talk in assessment situations.

The work and the findings which it has yielded so far are still tentative. The more closely we look at pupils' spoken language abilities, the more we realise how complex and subtle the business of communicating is. The most that we can claim at this point is to have made a start in disclosing this complexity and in suggesting where to start in trying to assess it reliably.

Margaret MacLure is a research officer and Tom Gorman a principal research officer at the National Foundation for Educational Research.



# Capability Benford

Julia Hagedorn meets the head of a village school who is determined to put learning into the hands of parents and pupils

I found Melvyn Benford, head of Lewknor primary school, half way up a ladder fixing some curtains. Almost before he reached the floor he had launched into an enthusiastic account of the philosophy which two years ago led to the school winning the coveted Royal Society of Arts Education for Capability Award for schools that encourage pupils "to be competent, to cope, to create and to cooperate".

Twelve years ago, when Melvyn Benford came to this small Oxfordshire village school, complete with thatched roof and village green, he decided to "put all the ingredients into a melting pot". "Many of the traditional values survive, but I loosened the bonds", he hedges being the division of the school into subjects, age groups, classes and teachers. The biggest constraint on a teacher, he believes, is to be alone in the classroom all day. Classes at Lewknor are not separated into infant and junior. The infants work together, three times a week only. Normally, the 50-plus children are split into groups that have nothing to do with age or ability.

The head and the two teachers (one privately funded by parents and a charity) each have a group for 30 minutes every morning. They are responsible for keeping an eye on the children within this group and checking that their basic skills are up to scratch. This means that each teacher works with children across the age range of four to 11 and oversees the development that occurs within their age span.

some new building since and the social mix has improved, but there is still a great deal of suspicion about Melvyn Benford's ideas.

Parental attitudes vary from grudging tolerance to complete acceptance with a heavy measure of gossip thrown in, he says. What the school is trying to do is still not fully understood. Many parents thought "children should be sat in rows and made to learn".

Melvyn Benford seems to enjoy being in the firing line: "When you have a belief you have to put it into practice," he says.

That belief extends to a firm conviction that parents are the most powerful learning agents in a child's life. Since October he has been inviting parents to collect their children early from school one afternoon a week to work with them at home.

**'The biggest constraint on a teacher is to be alone in the classroom all day'**

On Tuesday afternoons, the children are in charge of the entire content and organization of their work. But they must tell the teachers in the morning what they are planning to do, why and how.

On another afternoon, teachers plan the work but share it out among small groups of mixed ages who investigate problems together - the older ones directing. At the end of the afternoon, the entire school meets to listen to the group leaders explaining what they have found out. The little ones may not understand much of what is going on but they get the experience of listening while the team leaders learn to talk clearly to an audience.

Other groups are taken by teachers on subjects the teachers may be particularly interested in such as the development of folk music in England and North America.

**'Teachers have to abandon control over the children and the curriculum and allow them to determine their own learning'**

By the time the children are top juniors, Melvyn feels they must be prepared for the different approach of the secondary school. So work is done on the blackboard and French and German classes begin in order to give confidence in foreign pronunciations.

In spite of the apparent randomness of some of the curriculum at Lewknor, the children perform well in separate subjects when they go on to secondary schools. Tables are still learnt by rote and so is spelling.

It all seems to work, and not because Lewknor is the sort of trendy, middle class school found in some rural areas. In 1977, the village came out bottom of the list of Oxfordshire villages in a survey of incomes and social class. There has been

an attitude of both parents and the school is amazing, the head says. The parents are much more profoundly involved in their child's work and, through discussions with him about the work they do at home, are beginning to think more like teachers.

Many of the parents are still reluctant to take part but Melvyn keeps trying. He has started "paired" reading schemes after school between parent and child along the lines of the Haringey and Belfield projects. He says to parents, "I'll educate your child as best as possible with all the tools available to me if that's what you want. But are you going to turn away the opportunity for them to do even better?"

In his desire to involve the community as a whole - not solely the parents - the staff literally knock on doors to tell villagers what is going on at the school. One of the two main classrooms has become a community hall with daytime access split equally between school and community. They tell them about the Tuesday Club where children and adults mix together, about the outings arranged for village and pupils.

A newsletter goes to 150 homes in the village and is run off on a copier bought with money from the Schools Council and the RSA award. Villagers pay 50p a copy and the children have learned to produce the copies, thus "extending the capability concept where ever there is a chance".

Perhaps one of the best times to judge a school socially is at lunch-time. At Lewknor, lunch is an unusually pleasant experience. The older children sit with the younger ones, supervising and serving them. They also bring the head, two staff and any visitor their meals with a smile and a query at the right time as to second helpings.

After lunch, there is no forced exodus to the outside. On the day of my visit, a couple were using the microcomputer upstairs, a group sat in one of the rooms playing their musical instruments, and in the hall another group had organized a free dance session with the help of an old record player. There was no need for any adult supervision. The children were putting into practice Melvyn Benford's philosophy.

"Teachers," he concluded "have to abandon control over the children and the curriculum and allow them to determine their own learning. This is difficult, but without it there is no real learning for capability."

Further details of the Education for Capability Awards from The Royal Society of Arts, John Adam Street, Adelphi, London WC2N 6BB, can



Headmaster Melvyn Benford reviews progress



Home and school: an afternoon of geography with mother (left) and the thatched school roof and village green playground.



Mothers assist with music teaching (above) and older children are encouraged to help younger ones.



Once a teacher....

You want to know why Rob gave up teaching? Mrs Corbett exclaimed with some incredulity when I phoned. "Why he started in the first place would be a better question."

"I suppose," her husband said thoughtfully, rubbing the sawdust from his Sello tape enveloped eyes, "I suppose I gave up because all the time I was in school I was wondering if, in the outside world, people did anything real between one holiday and the next. Funny thing - I reckon I've done more teaching since I came out of the job than ever I did when I was in it."

Rob Corbett - Corbett to his friends - furniture maker, designer and Member of the Norfolk Guild of Craftsmen, is totally unpretentious. "It did come as a bit of a shock though to find I was a drop-out," he says in his soft Norfolk tones.

"The caravanners told me - 'You've chosen a lovely spot to drop-out, Mr Corbett,' they say. And I think - that's odd. Here I am working under pressure, all hours, taking furniture to London and Scotland, doing the shows in the summer and I've been a drop-out all along. Least I know I can't go any lower."

Corpusbury village, home of Corbett Woodwork is half way between Norwich and nowhere. In summer, the air is heavy with the scent of corn and yew, the verges gaudy with poppy, rapeseed and knapweed and the field corners dotted by great ancient trees - oak, ash and beech.

We sat and talked in the shady meadow behind the workshop. Mallow blossomed, a young mallow chased butterflies and a pair of sleek, brown rats slipped between the reed stems. In winter, when the wind shrieks down from the Fens and the stream floods and the caravanners are gone, it may seem less lovely.

As to why he started teaching. "... the Depression, that's all," said Corbett. "Just the Depression. Having struggled through that my parents were determined we boys should have our own professions. I'd always wanted to work with wood. My grandfather was village carpenter, my brother a woodworker and our children have followed on. It's in the blood."

"After I came out of the Forces I went to Loughborough. Marvellous place... Barnsley, the great cabinet maker, was there... been my model ever since. I never intended to teach. It just came."

Twelve years came about in all. At Stansted Secondary in Hertfordshire. Then after a decade of detentions and detentions, leavened only by the school making one real piece of furniture, a chest of drawers, a chest of drawers, every day, he decided to leave. But not precipitately.

"They needed money. We had £50 saved up. When I went to see the building society the manager said, 'I fear you are sadly undercapitalized. But I'll let you have the money if you can get me a letter from a local authority or a bank manager. I didn't bother to open it for days. And it was... a pretty obvious Freudian slip, I thought.'"

They scraped together £500 for a ramshackle house (it was 1961 remember), spent the first year improving it and the second perfecting the design and jigs for the future Corbett Woodwork and looking for a house/workshop. In 1964 they found it. In Corpusbury. Rob handed in his notice and they struck out alone.

"It is not a bad place to sell furniture. We get tourists coming through... people see the display in the shop or at one of the shows and they find us in the Eastern Arts craft centre. And yes... quite a lot come on recommendation."

"It's a bit out of the way though - keep a fence around us like that - that way if a customer goes to a bit of trouble to find us - then I know they're really interested - saves a lot of bad business."

For the last few days he supplemented his earnings by part-time teaching at Greshams school. "I did it for a week from that. The rest had to come out of the workshop. A farm labourer was getting £50 a week. It was just possible."

Now he has as much work as he can

# FOR THE LOVE OF WOOD

Rob Corbett tells Susan Thomas why teaching CDT goes against the grain



Rob Corbett doing what he likes best in his Norfolk workshop

mnaga and three assistants - one daughter, one nephew and one local lad who came, straight from school, ten years ago. A host of other youngsters have come and gone, quite a few to set up their own workshops.

Many of them carry on in the tradition he taught them - producing designs which glorify the wood, enhancing the natural grain and colour, scoring foreign woods and the use of stains.

From the beginning, customers commissioned individual pieces. He has made pulpits for parsons, pews for parishioners, coat-hangers for choristers, and beautiful golden furniture to grace the homes of Englishmen - strong, unadorned and so sleek that you have to stroke them.

But does he ever clash with a customer over taste? "I reckon if neither of us is downright miserable, I've got it about right," he says. Even so, sometimes cooperation is beyond him.

When a local church wanted a coronation chair and produced "a dreadful example of a thing to copy - it had great bulbous legs and a padded leather seat", he rebelled. "I made a slender wooden scaffold and hung a moulded wooden seat on it." It was a triumph of good over bad design and the vicar loved it.

He hes not to read about other designers, he says, for fear it will inhibit his own work. He's hard put to describe his own style, and so am I. "Modern furniture made in the traditional way," he says. But there is more to it than that. Perhaps the secret lies in the bold horizontal, sweeping stretcher bars and wonderfully complex arrangements which lie beneath the stark table tops.

He is, above all, an English wood buff. "That's beautiful," he says, stroking the grain of a refectory table with a loving, work-chipped thumb. "Can't better it. I reckon only Englishmen can work English wood, understand it, know what it's endured through our winters."

"Look at this," he said indicating a sheer, stark cherry bookcase. "Looks lovely when it's made up. Now cherry's very unforgiving. If you don't cut it exact it'll split - crackle - right through. Elm now, that's accommodating, it'll ease itself round to your way."

He is not happy with craft education these days. "To my mind, the way they teach it in schools and colleges is all wrong. That's very presumptuous of me to say so, I daresay, but I don't think you can design anything till you have the skills and you know about the qualities of the material."

"It'd be like teaching children to read without learning the ABC. Though maybe they do that too. I had a lad come to me from the Royal College of Art. Trained as a designer. In what I ask him? Just design, he tells me, anything - wood, metal, plastic, clay. How can you design before you know the materials?"

"Anyway, youngsters of 14, 15, 16 aren't even interested. They only want to make things. Give them a good design by all means. Talk to them about it, but don't expect them to do it for themselves until they've learnt the skills."

"I'm not the only one thinks this way. I've got friends - who've been asked to teach this new Craft Design Technology - say to me 'I don't know what the hell I'm supposed to be doing - wish to God I could go back to teaching a decent dovetail.' And where it's not too rare to find good craftsmen, it's very rare to find craftsmen designers. It's asking too much of the kids."

His experience is that youngsters simply don't want to know about designing for four, five, even six years after starting in the workshop. "At first they just gawp at you. 'What'... they say if you try to interest them, 'what'... But later they become creative. That's when they should go to college."

He gets a great deal of pleasure from teaching his trainees. So has he ever regretted his decision to leave the classroom? "Never. The pay is worse, the pressure can be very intense and of course, it's a very tedious existence, but there aren't many people as can say they're doing the one thing they always wanted to."

"You know, when I came here, after a while I joined the Rotary Club, and for the first time in my life I felt that people took me seriously, a proper member of the village who was making a real contribution to society. Now I never felt like that when I was a teacher."

One of the most important things schools can do to help industry and themselves is to teach keyboard skills argues John Huffell

# Key skills

Businessmen are asked from time to time by educationists "what are the future changing needs you require from the education system"? No clear, concise answer emerges, apart from a feeling that with changing technology, some changes need to take place. There is however one area that will greatly benefit all young people as well as our nation trying to compete in international markets and looking for ways of improving our competitiveness.

The new skill is keyboard operation which up to now has been exclusively the province of typing and secretarial courses. It will be no substitute for a good grounding in literacy, numeracy and communication skills, but I believe it could challenge the limited resources available in other subject areas and come above many of them if priorities have to be established.

In the past the lack of keyboard skills has led to inefficiencies amongst many people who earn a living by producing prose without the benefit of a typist to convert it into clearly legible form. Today, as computers invade every walk of life, the range of keyboard users grows and grows.

The most obvious users are those operating computers and supporting the computer industry in such activities as the development of software applications. This group of keyboard users is growing daily. The finance industry covering banking and insurance is one of the leaders, but other businesses such as travel, retailing and warehousing are closing the gap.

The education system is currently spending a large amount of effort understanding the benefits computers can bring to the process of learning. We see most institutions of higher education with a comprehensive, if still inadequate, range of computing equipment in use by both staff and students. The penetration through to secondary and primary education is easy to forecast and only financial restraints will limit the rate at which schools will move towards every student using a keyboard almost every day of their school life.

The other area opening up to the widespread use of computers has come about through the introduction of the relatively inexpensive personal computer.

In the not too distant future even the smallest business will use a computer together with an increasing number in the homes, particularly those of the younger generation.

What are the benefits to be gained by training in keyboard skills?

A person using a single finger and not familiar with the positioning of the individual keys will probably perform at 5 words/minute.

Once the positions of the keys are understood this could probably increase to 10 words/minute. Recently I heard of two young schoolboys who after 2 weeks of training were achieving 18 words/minute and the average typist manages 50 to 60 words/minute with speeds of over 100 achievable by the outstanding performers.

It would seem, then, that if keyboard skills are taught and practised there is a potential improvement in performance of between five and ten times the rate achieved by the untrained. This can be directly related to the amount of equipment required to support a given number of people. It can be readily seen how scarce capital funds can be more efficiently applied to any application, whether it be in business, industry or education. The sooner we start, the better.

John Huffell is a senior manager responsible for introducing new technology into IBM's UK manufacturing operations.







## ARTS

## CHINA



## BOOKS

**Deconstruction: Theory and Practice.** By Christopher Norris.  
Methuen £6.50 and £2.95. 0 416 32070 8.  
**On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism.** By Jonathan Culler.  
Routledge and Kegan Paul £10.95 and £5.95.  
**Criticism in the Wilderness: The Study of Literature Today.** By Geoffrey H Hartman.  
Yale University Press £24.50 and £6.95.  
**Re-Reading English.** Edited by Peter Widdowson.  
Methuen £7.95 and £3.95.  
**Poetry as Discourse.** By Anthony Easthope.  
Methuen £8.50 and £3.50.  
**Formalism and Marxism.** By Tany Bennett.  
Methuen £6.50 and £3.25.

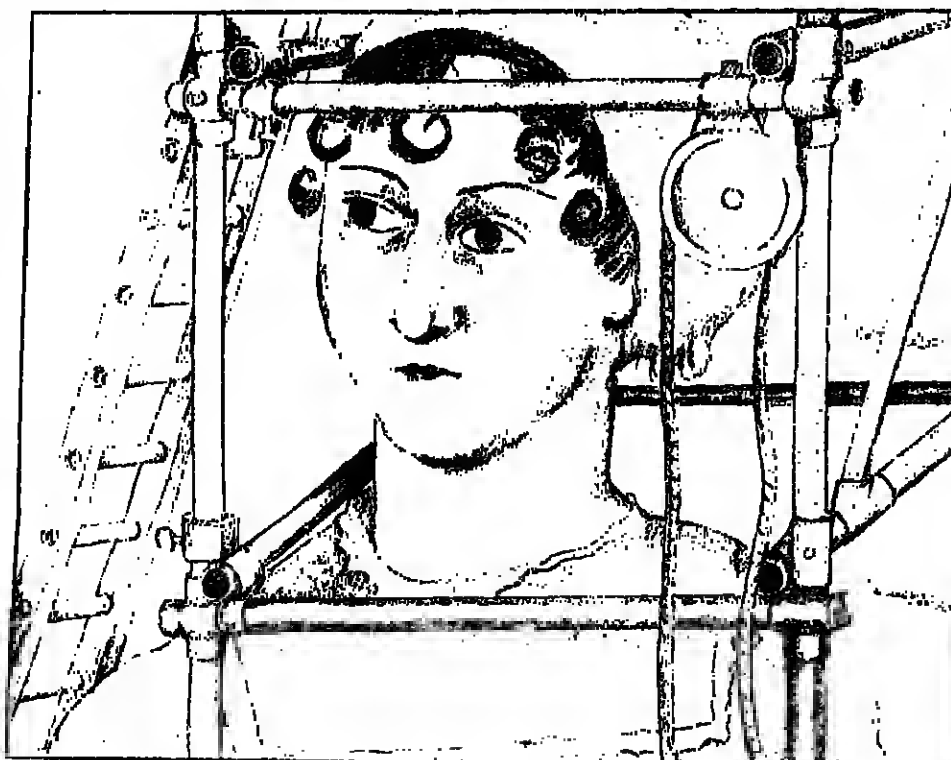
In the depths of the silly season *The TES* published a sort of satirical piece about new styles of critical talk, featuring Professor Rory McCab, Jr and other worthies of the out-going critical scenario. We were asked to parakeet of a horrible marxist-derridist gruel spiced with the latest deconstructionist feminist prattle. The result was very amusing, but perhaps a little disconcerting for those of us who thought satire's job was to cow entrenched establishments and bastions of privilege. You might think the British imagination was less possessed by the wilder sides and asides of Jacques Derrida than by the collected thoughts of (say) Richard Baker and Robin Ray.

Christopher Norris's book on *Deconstruction* is a formidable, yet (taken slowly) perfectly accessible guide not merely to blunders like Derrida but also to the corpus of philosophical writers and texts which has led to something of a coup in favour of Continental "philosophic" criticism and against the received idea of Anglo-American "practical" criticism. "Practical" criticism prides itself on being humbly instrumental. Norris is able to explain how this humility is used to secure immunity from critical scrutiny of the language and posture of the critic himself. It also, by a rather facile use of the idea of "literariness", can be used to prevent any "irrelevant" intrusion of "wider still and wider" margins of thought. But if, as recent critical thought insists, there is no release from the figurative nature of language in discourse, then philosophy and criticism themselves are a kind of bleached poetry. The consequences of deconstruction involve a sharpened sense of the positive utility of those texts which are treated with literary excellence.

In explaining this Norris moves from a consideration of structuralism and old New Criticism to the dramatic advent of Derrida and his dealings with philosophy generally in which the iconoclasm of Nietzsche is his example. From this you might reasonably infer that the compatibility of Deconstruction and Marxism is a bit dubious. Marxism tends to feel that if God is dead there is no need to resurrect Nietzsche.

Norris has written a very useful book. *The Methuen series* is associated for good or ill with popularization, and he has not altogether avoided the brochureish element of *Higher Advertising* which entails the production of blindness as well as insight, semantic gaps and aporias, to use the term Deconstruction has made so fashionable. But the time to deconstruct the deconstructor is not yet.

Jonathan Culler has a prefabricated reputation as a kind of global village explainer of new modes, trends and tendencies. The reader of *On Deconstruction* might well suffer from a sense of intellectual agoraphobia as he moves through the wide variety of dogma which seems to characterize the attempt to rationalise the act of reading.



## Rebuilding Jane Austen

Edward Neill on some leading exponents of the new literary criticism

itself defined by Barbara Johnson as "the careful teasing out of warring significations within the text", bombarded as he is by a remorseless name-dropping which lets you know (in both senses) which names to drop. American appropriations of continental thought have often with justice been called sterilizing, but I do find here not only an enormous intellectual range but considerable scruple, integrity and pertinacity of investigation. A hard but rewarding read, *Practical Criticism* by Tany Bennett, the reader may find no contradiction without shame.

Another equally ambitious book which does show as imperfect assimilation of the new criticism from Europe is Geoffrey Hartman's *Criticism in the Wilderness*. Hartman's title is supposed to be an irony at Matthew Arnold's expense. Arnold thought we were living in an Age of Criticism, which was by definition cultural dereliction, but that we might prepare the ground for a new creative entry into "the true life of literature" enjoyed by the epics of Aeschylus and Shakespeare. Hartman points out that if Arnold came back he would find wilderness of criticism, only more so. Hartman implies that he would be wrong to be dismayed, and that the "extraordinary language" of modern criticism makes up for it. In the process he lumps together some strange bedfellows, including what Nietzsche called the "absurd muddlehead" Carlyle, Nietzsche, and the demoted archivist Norrhop Frye.

Professor Hartman has some pretty extraordinary language himself. His plea for a "hermeneutics of indeterminacy" looks suspiciously as if it can't decide whether to be hermeneutically indeterminate or hermeneutic about indeterminacy, but his glib phrase-making implies that it doesn't

really matter, with by no means happy results. It's true that in a sense he covers a lot of ground, but the reader is never quite sure where the book is taking him, and it often reads uncomfortably like adventures of the *esprit de finesse* among card-indexes. The trouble is, I believe, that Hartman's intellectual pursuits are one thing, his pedagogical idealism another. The second half of his book forgets the need to be extraordinary and achieves tones of gravel-voiced despair over the loss of social clout experienced by teachers in the humanities when compared with "business leaders, lawyers, doctors, scientists" and others - a worse state of dereliction than that contemplated by Arnold. But Hartman's book is symptomatic of as well as *nucléaire* about the dereliction.

Hartman's problem was partly his inability to realize that his generous American idealism was bound in the end to echo, not to controvert, Arnold's critical melancholia. But Arnold at least knew exactly what he was doing and found an answerable style for what, however deludedly, he wanted to do. In England the critical thrust currently takes the form of a desire avowedly to "politicize" critical discourse. The origins of this trait lie partly with Arnold himself and the Leavisites, who categorically "excluded" political talk as culturally meaningless, but were themselves political enough to exude some naked anti-progressivism. The contributors to *Re-Reading English* are certainly dab hands at sniffing out ways in which the institutionalizing of "English" was ideologically unsound, hegemonic, chauvinist, sexist, you name it. They are a gleefully perturbed gang, proud possessors of the latest critical jargon, and eager to point out that previous custodians of literature were prone to "authoritarian modes of surveillance". There

seems, however, to be quite a lot of "surveillance" going on here. For a whiff of authoritarianism, see the editor's claim that Catherine Bell "reclaims a 'great tradition' text by consciously producing its contemporary (feminist) meaning". The fallacy pervading this book is the idea that avowedly the act of reading is never disinterested somehow exempts one's own bias because that bias is positively flaunted rather than tacit. Much of the confusion over which parties brave new world this book is taking us to is contained in the editor's plaintive claim to "despite the abundance of 'finely-honed theoretical work' which is 'aimed at the destruction of literature departments', those departments are not 'reeling as they should', when he attempts to 'mobilize' indignation at the 'English Departments' being closed down 'Thatcherite interests'. Choose, if you will, between the upper and the other millstone.

Anthony Easthope is another contributor. *Re-Reading English* has written a long length exposition of his theories. Easthope, to Flaubert, evidently believes that "history is bourgeois is the beginning of all view". He does so and should live together poetry as modernism. In between it runs through a gloomy tunnel of bourgeois ideology. Easthope concentrates on examples from Shakespeare, Pope and Wordsworth here, but other people abound, and let no one doubt that he is *au courant*, though his ability to seize on "ideological meanings" of the most innocuous looking technical device can look dangerous, like a determined effort to see that the devil is in all the good tunes. His particular bete noire here is the "Cartesian ego" or transcendental subject and Pound's *Cantos* come in for particular praise for "corroding, at every moment, the empire of the cogito". Pound might seem an odd choice here, particularly if we remember R. L. S. attempt to subvert interest in the *Cantos* as expression of Pound's egocentricity. Let us perhaps too biased to be taken altogether seriously here. So, perhaps, is Mr Easthope. But an interesting book, marred only by what Mr Bayley has called "the need to feel important as a politician".

Tany Bennett, in some sense the cross-contributor to *Re-Reading English*, points out his *Formalism and Marxism* that "formalism" particularly as applied to the Russian school of the 1920s, is tendentious and unfair testament of approval. He shows how Shklovsky's famous dictum about art's "making strange" has a properly radical concomitant in calling it a question what might have seemed "natural" mores, institutions, customs, contexts. However, when he agrees with Bakhtin's claim that Bakhtin's treatment of the body subverts the fixed hierarchies represented by the "official ideology", it seems to me that both critics are completely wrong. Bakhtin is horribly impressed by his body. He is also horrified by it. And in this he is perfectly medieval. The culminating point of Bennett's book is an attack on Althusser and Terry Eagleton for answering the (obscure) question, "What is literature?" For Bennett, the idea that there is "literariness" is simply false and it is we who rear meanings on the production site of texts. This, however, is to desert a reasonable question, which is why a site labelled "Jane Austen" has been chosen for much rebuilding, while one labelled "Fanny Burney" is more or less derelict. Bennett's "solution" is familiarizes as the patent fact that critics are often more fascinated by each other than by art. But as Hector said in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*: "Tis mad idolatry / To make the servant greater than the god."

## Playfellow

**Tom Stoppard.** By Thomas R. Whitaker.  
Macmillan Modern Dramatists, £11.00  
0 333 28502 6, £3.95, 28503 4.  
Macmillan Modern Dramatists, £11.00  
0 333 28502 6, £3.95, 28503 4.

Professor Whitaker's book is the seventh to appear on our most distinguished and versatile comic dramatist. It covers chronologically the whole Stoppard oeuvre - plays, adaptations, television/radio scripts, and novels - illuminated by the dramatist's own comments in various interviews; and alleged "sources" and "influences" are critically debated.

The writing, however, is unnecessary abstruse - in places, I found the chapter, "Playing Our Absence" more difficult than the complexities of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*. But persevere. On *Jumpers*, which he terms "more brilliant and substantial",

and on the "ironic prism" of *Travesties*, he is particularly helpful. He is, however, particularly insistent that "quotes... are written to happen, to be read, and to realize their full potential only from the closest collaboration between author, director, actors, and audience in the context of 'Sources' and 'Influences'". Little it is in what Stoppard does with little that his originality lies. He is eclectic as Shakespeare, but *Godot* is soforcing in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* that does not make him an absurdist. Aesthetically, more than a political activist, Stoppard remains "his own man". This book, then, is a very useful survey of his subject, though its judgments, persuasive in its eloquence, do not everywhere pay the grasp.

Julian

## Fetish of our time?

A H Halsey on the pursuit for equality

**Applied Equality: Readings on Economic and Social Policy.** Edited by W. Leavis.  
Macmillan Press £18.00 and £6.95.  
0333 33129 and 353137

A book of readings is normally intended to introduce the reader to the present state of knowledge in some specialized subject. Equality and inequality in society is a topic of sufficient difficulty and importance to warrant such a book. To be sure, selection is difficult and if the essays are already published, the challenge to an editor is also to produce an adequate summary of the literature into which the chosen pieces are to be placed.

The relevant literature is vast, reflecting a discussion of how men and women do and should live together which is as old as civilization and perhaps the signal mark of its existence. We cannot say that the outcome has been total agreement. We can say that the analysis of principles of human association such as liberty, equality and fraternity have become highly sophisticated. And we can say further that, in the serious literature, no single principle can be proposed as absolute in any realistically realizable society of any scale and complexity.

Equality in its various prescriptive and descriptive meanings has been at the centre of debate in modern times. But the equality principle can be intelligently applied to issues of economic and social policy only in the context of the claims of other values to influence distributive decisions. In that context there is a clear case for recommending students to read the classic advocates such as Tawney on equality, J. S. Mill on liberty, or St Paul on equality.

There is a case, too, for a judicious assembly of readings from recent contributions to debate about equality so that students may know what John Rawls or A. K. Sen or R. M. Dawkins have argued and what their major critics, including Daniel Bell or John Barry or Milton Friedman, have replied. What is questionably valuable is a collection of readings deliberately assembled for or against the case for egalitarianism. Yet that is precisely what William Leavis offers here.

Leavis attempts to justify his lop-sided compilation on the grounds that "the leading fetish of our time" is that "most people believe in equality", and that "most people also believe that equality as a goal is entirely self-evident". He does not substantiate these empirical asser-

tions. He does not explain how it comes about that we fail to practice the equality in which we are alleged so firmly to believe. Instead he enjoys proponents of equality to be grateful for what he unannounces as "a dissection of a faith which has hitherto been largely unexamined." He should not be surprised if the reaction of the knowledgeable egalitarian is not so much gratitude as scepticism that Leavis has read the literature. And the reaction of the uncommitted is likely to be irritation with the assumption that bias is more likely to persuade than dispassionate scholarship.

So the book gets off to a bad start and when one reads the absurd assertion that this allegedly unexamined faith starts from the premise that "nature makes man equal", one is sorely tempted to abandon it as worthless. To do so, however, would be a mistake, for most of the subsequent chapters by other authors are of high merit. Admittedly there are occasional howlers comparable with those of Leavis as when Mr Andrew Wace assures us (page 201), with reference to contemporary Britain, that "it is perfectly true that medical care is equally available to the rich and to the poor". Claims of that kind might well remind the reader of Malcolm Muggeridge's experiences as the *Manchester Guardian* foreign correspondent in Moscow in the 1930s. On one occasion Muggeridge had to telephone the latest Soviet official statistics of naval production and he managed to get past the censor with an extra sentence - "Suggest tell Marines". In Ward's case the suggested recipients should be the authors of the Black Report.

Or again, some of the writers "against equality" waste space by attributing idiocy to their opponents. For example, Professor Flew assumes that Mrs Floud cannot distinguish between educational opportunity and achieved education and assumes himself that self-evidently the two can never be identical. *Baroness* analysis of social class in such insular attributions or casual assumptions like in establishing the circumstances where there is or is not a choice for the individual which makes a reality of *ex ante* and *ex post* equality or inequality.

Nevertheless, and despite these blemishes, there is much to be learnt from the body of the book. J. R. Lucas's quick elucidation of the concept of equality is powerfully critical. Professor Harry Johnson writes (or rather

speaks) an entertaining commentary on the contribution of current economic theory to the understanding of equality; and Geoffrey Marshall illuminates the complexity of applying the equality principle in the practice of law in such a way as to emphasize the claims of equality vis a vis other principles in judging human action. Incidentally it is to be noted that the collection would have been immensely strengthened from the point of view of Professor Leavis's intentions if it had included T. H. Marshall's superbly dispassionate essay on the value conflicts of democratic welfare-capitalism.

In any case Leavis's decision to publish only pieces by authors whom he takes to be in some sense against equality flows from work as a teaching aid. To understand the pertinacity of either James Coleman or Nalban Keyfitz's review of Jencks, the student must not only first read the original *Inequality* but should also look at Jencks' subsequent *What Gets Ahead?* to determine whether anything was learnt from these and other critics. The editor's introduction might reasonably be expected at least to point to the existence of this later writing. Again it is not possible to make much of Ward's chapter without first reading the article by Bernard Williams which he attacks. And Professor Posner's chapter is an article from *The Public Interest* criticizing a previous article in the same journal by Lester Thurow which the reader would either have to consult or conclude quite erroneously that Thurow is potty. How very much more useful it would have been to juxtapose selected theses and antitheses in the same volume.

The two essays by Coleman and Keyfitz may be specially commended to TES readers who missed them when they first appeared in 1973. They are a powerful modification of the crude interpretation of Jencks that education contributes little or nothing to social inequality and they both demonstrate the scientific competence with which such passionate matters can be discussed. Elsewhere and briefly, Harry Johnson illustrates vividly the difference between equality of opportunity and equality of result by pointing to the inconsistency of those who advocate greater equality of opportunity for students while simultaneously approving of teachers' pay scales which drive the best teachers to the best universities with the best, most teachable students.

## Not solely in the head

**The Stage-Play World.** By Julie Briggs.  
Oxford University Press £9.95.  
0 19 29146 2, £3.95, 289134 0

In a preface to *This Stage-Play World*, Julie Briggs states clearly her intention to bring the "contours" of literature, "this sharper focus through a general survey of the landscape in which they operate", a task undertaken in the "authoritative predecessor" but illumined by the findings of "those recent historians of the period whose fresh and stimulating analyses of early modern society and its attitudes go far towards justifying yet another attempt to bring the literature and the history of the age together". The years spanned are 1584-1625. So much by way of preface.

The body of the book comprises a dense, albeit synoptic, scrutiny of six literary areas - Views of Nature, Time in Society, Religion, Education, The Court and its Arts, The Theatre - framed by an Introduction and conclusion which characterize the period as a whole and close. There follows a helpful chronology and suggestions for further reading. The foreword admirably contains the material, "obviousness or familiarity" to specialists in no way displacing its value as a general readership book.

Julie Briggs is fairly thorough in her survey of the details with which she is, for the most part, well-versed.

She tackles the major issues with a clear head and a sure pen. Except, that is, for the theatre. The book's subtitle is "English Literature and the theatre 1584-1625". So, the theatre is not literature. It does, however, have a literature of its own. Indeed, Shakespeare, Marlowe and Jonson can claim to be part of that literature to which Mrs Briggs is providing a background. Background to background, you might say. Which is all very curious.

Had the author stuck to her brief, "to bring the literature and the history together", the theatre section might have been immeasurably better. As it is, she dismisses the prehistory in a single paragraph (page 187), deploring its "scatological preoccupation and thereby denying herself the opportunity to present the theatrical forces in any meaningful social setting. There are minimal references to theatre space or form, practical stagecraft and acting styles; there is no discussion of the emblematic nature of the drama, with its special significance for the unlettered among the audience, nor of its effects upon playwrighting; the literary professional companies to which the new playwrights and vice versa remain unexplored (and there is only a passing reference to the assessment of the boy actors, whose pioneering efforts made possible the achievement, both literary and practical, of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. These are glaring lacunae; there are others.

Julia Briggs' approach to the theatre

is literary, like that of so many academics. Yet, even from this standpoint, the discussion centring upon categories of tragedy and comedy lacks focus, while some assertions are questionable. To waste space, for example, had tragedy "developed out of comedy and never entirely outgrown its parent"? In their differing ways, Goliath *Quest* (c. 1526), Bala's *King Johan* (c. 1535) and *William of Wake* (c. 1580) provide the formative elements of an English tragic form wholly independent of comedy.

Had Mrs Briggs not stated her firm conviction that "drama was the most representative of the age's forms", there would have been less reason to point to inadequacies in the evidence for that claim. Drama is enacted upon a stage before people, not solely in the head. Since the rest of the book can safely be recommended, the shortcomings of the theatre section are regrettable.

David Blewitt

**A New Companion to Greek Tragedy.** By Andrew Brown, comes from Croom Helm at £14.95 (£6.95 paperback). It is an unusual selective encyclopedia, whose entries include (apart from names from 15 tragedies) items like *Didymos*, *Oracles*, *Highly*, and *Freud*. Brief comments on non-tragic writers, eg Herodotus, Plutarch, are also included. The one massive comment on Seneca, the one Roman, gains in the book, is not valuable.

## Clever men at Oxford

**From Clergyman to Don: the Rise of the Academic Profession in Nineteenth-Century Oxford.** By A J Engel.  
Clarendon Press, Oxford, £22.50. 0 19 822606 3

Unlike Cambridge University, which has been sadly neglected in the matter of its written history, Oxford is busy organizing the writing up of its own. Among its contributors will be the American scholar Arthur Engel, and the publication of this book strongly confirms his credentials to participate in that venture.

The tale it tells is of the politicking and campaigning which led to the emergence, out of a branch of the Anglican ministry, of a profession dedicated to university teaching according to a particular pastoral model, and, to a lesser extent, to research. In 1850 nearly all the dons were parsons (and most were celibate), and 80 per cent of the undergraduates were orphans. Within three decades this picture was transformed.

The author guides us with great skill through the important mid-century Commissions, though he is less successful in relating his story to the development of alternative branches of the academic profession - to university teaching in Scotland and Ireland, in the emergent English provincial universities, in the new universities of the overseas empire, and indeed to

the career of public school master and headmaster, Mark Pattison. Mandell Creighton and the author of *Alice in Wonderland* all make their appearance, but Alice herself could have asked some pointed questions about the assumptions, and the jealous self-interest, of many of the protagonists. How, for example, did the argument resolve at a crucial stage into a conflict between teaching and research as the main work of a don: had they never heard of sabbaticals? And even in those days there were "monetarist" economists around like Charles Appleton of St John's College, who in the 1870s urged the case for attempting to quantify the return on endowments and investment in those two activities.

Though Dr Engel does not claim to give us any clear idea of the evolution of the university curriculum, he takes many illuminating side-glances. Both those who have chafed at the traditional language elements in the Oxford English degree programme and those who have rejoiced in them as an introduction to linguistics will be amused at the angry reaction to the election of the young Anglo-Saxon philologist A S Napier to a chair of English Language and Literature in 1885. This was designed, his critics claimed, "for the promotion of the educationally valueless study of the archaic dialects of Northern Europe".

John Honey

## Eighteenth turn

**Macmillan History of Literature: Eighteenth Century English Literature.** By Macmillan E Novak.  
Macmillan £14.00, 333 26913 6, £4.50, 26914 4.

A history of literature is not readily amenable to tidy divisions into centuries, but *Macmillan History of Literature: Eighteenth Century English Literature*, with only the odd one or two Procrustean nudges, succeeds, within the compass of 200 pages, in presenting us with a convincing picture of eighteenth century literature as a complete entity between 1700 (death of Dryden) and 1798 (*The Lyrical Ballads*).

He covers all the main productions of the century in poetry, prose and

drama, and is particularly good on the story of the novel. Swift, Pope, and the Johnson Circle, discriminatingly apportioning his space between the major writers and the still necessarily-mentionable lesser lights - a feat calling for considerable scholarship and deep familiarity with the period.

He has an attractive style, simple but forceful, and a keen visual sense - like the Defoe he greatly admires. His book, beautifully produced, with 12 pages of photographs, a chronological table and a short bibliography, should appeal equally to the university student and the ordinary reader.

HP

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TONY WEIR

*Negligence for 'A' Level* is published specifically for the Associated Examinations Board's optional paper 2, which requires candidates to show a detailed knowledge and understanding of the law of negligence. The book, which comprises the opening part of Tony Weir's established *Casebook on Tort*, is notable for the lively, informative and thought-provoking commentaries attached to extracts from the leading cases and statutes on negligence.

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**Sweet & Maxwell**

## A song for democracy

**Song and Democratic Culture in Britain.** By Ian Watson.  
Croom Helm £14.95, 0 7099 2770 3.

I have often wondered why books about left-wing literary criticism have such an alienating prose style. This book is filled with lugubrious jargon according to which no one simply does anything but "plays an active role", discussion always becomes "intellectual", and there is an abundance of "autonomy", "hegemony" and "ideological praxis". I suppose Ian Watson could argue that these expressions are part of the trade of contemporary sociology and literary criticism but they make the book difficult to read and guarantee that it will not do what he wants it to do: "to give folk singers a lead and to encourage more of them to sing newer, more political and working-class oriented

material". Watson says we need to come to grips with "difficult words" but he forgets that the purpose of words is to render ideas clearly; it is no use arguing therefore that beneath or behind his convoluted vocabulary and syntax the ideas remain good, for words are themselves patterns of ideas. If the words are disordered, it follows that the ideas are awry as well.

What Watson wants to know - though he waits until page 143 in order to ask it - is "why then do working-class people not in general sing folk songs in their parlours or flock to folk clubs; and why do they, as a rule, enjoy other forms of song?" And he cannot find an answer except in "aggressive hegemonic nature of the dominant culture."

In the prescriptive last chapter "Prospects and Suggestions for Cultural Policy", Watson goes in for

some fairly aggressive policies of his own as he argues that working-class people must be taught their own culture. This, you might say, is his first and last hegemonic demand. It consists largely in "the crying need for a theoretical groundwork wherein 'We must lose our shyness of abstractions' (no one can say Watson does not give a lead) and produce 'a new committed song periodical'." I cannot see this becoming a success if, with its footnotes to Gramsci, it has to compete with *Sounds and New Musical Express* - no, not even if it is "rooted in concrete" class experience.

Watson makes a few interesting remarks about the development of songs but his evangelical Marxism and excessive verbosity ensure that his book will be read with interest only by co-conspirators in the theoretical agi-

Peter Mullen



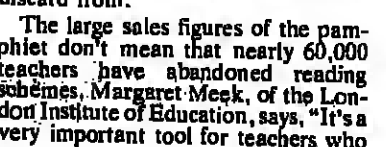
## BOOKS

## Mary Hoffman talks to the author of 'Individualised Reading'

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The level any reader in at can be established simply by offering her or him a few books from one of the pages. If those are read with an



*Individualised Reading* by Bernice K. Cliff Moon is published by The Centre for the Teaching of Reading, School of Education, University of Reading, 29, Eastern Avenue, Reading, RG1 5RU, price 70p plus 25p postage.

## Namesake

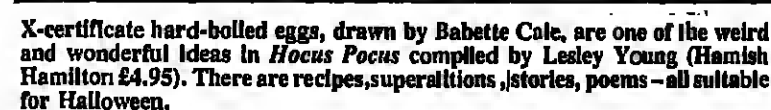
And people (including the Cholmondelys) feel strongly about how their names are pronounced and spelt, for there is a deep connexion between name and identity. The patriarchal system of inherited surnames, the social pressures relating to name-change on marriage, so-called "courtesy titles", "given" and "taken" names, the "open alias" (such as a pen name), the "management" of one's name – these are only some of the topics discussed in this thought-provoking book.

## Bruins' lib

## Boxing power

**Powys's power**  
The highly charged and flamboyant mysticism of the novelist and sage John Cowper Powys is, given un inhibited rein in two slim volumes of his letters. Powys to Eric the Red, edited by Cedric Hentschel and Powys to Cecil, edited by Robert Blackmore. (Kendal Woolf £8.50 each). To the Shakespearean critic G. Wilson Knight, he rumbles and rambles over sex and literature, while to his Swedish

# Dark and devilish deeds



Although Sarah romms endlessly over the moors with Romany Robbins and even journeys back into days of yore, the pace is sluggish in the poem's stagflation. Hearts are heavy, and the sun is absent. Everyone lingers, ponders and muses in the dew or the dusk. As if those angelic child-portraits on sale in department stores great attention lavished on the heroine's tear-filled eyes: "like dewdrops on blue-bells, one lady observes. Spun-gold curls command equal admiration from old and young." The gypsy who broods over the smoldering embers beside her car has a branding the fire so listlessly that she fails to burn the sinister rag doll which is at the bottom of the trouble: "I'm thinking that somewhere, deep in the breast, a heart-beat is a murmuring."

How I longed for it to stop.

From sentimental reverie to businesslike dismemberment, in the eighth story, Kenneth Ring's collection, *The Werewolf Mask*, there are at least a dozen corpses, and the coup de grace is usually delivered in the culminating paragraph. To prevent the reader from becoming attached to these potential stiffies, most are rendered flat or dislikable from the start. Ian, for instance, calmly watches the severed head of his least favourite uncle roll along the carpet. Women rarely appear, though there is a female vampire, a haunted house with a projected ghost, a dead daughter too young to be a witch, and a grasping Grandny who, having poisoned her granddaughter, sips coffee which Lucinda has previously laced with the same herbicide.

The title-story comes first and the later fictions depend less on the stab of gory fangs than on the intricacies of ingenious plots; even, in the case of "Deedly Creature" and "Body Changer," on a glimmer of psychological insight. Authentic desires and forebodings may arguably be discerned in accounts of a boy whose guardian monster annihilates his opponents and another who is preyed upon by a cold man seeking to appropriate his strength.

Probably the best of this gruesome bunch is *Demon of the Dark* by Terrance Dick, a former script-editor of the "Doctor Who" series, which brings a brisk irreverent professionalism to the task of giving us the creeper. A property tycoon takes over a City office block for redevelopment, heedless of its historic notoriety, and in the war of the Minstrelsy, the dark lurks beneath the sun. The ensuing upheaval is superbly sorted out by the modern brilliance of young Tom Scarsdale with the help of a cocoa-drinking vicar, a show-biz professor, and assorted archaeologists. Some readers may be repelled by our hero's lofty condescension to his mother (not to mention the stoning of a witch in Petticoat Lane). But, after a surfeit of child-abuse and the foregoing books, it's refreshing to see youth in the vanguard and an older generation put in its place. "You only live to listen to 'Today in Parliament' and to think just how stupid adults could be."

### Marion Glastonbury

## Flora and fauna in season

Wilde's *Book of the Year* is one which will certainly interest those with more than just a temporary passion for the activities of living things. The authors have organized their information into four main chapters, each devoted to a subject, within which are a series of self-contained, double-page topic spreads. There are 96 headings, some of which are related, either in terms of a broad pattern, such as ecology, or more specifically as in a study of carnivorous plants. On some pages there are

While this book would certainly make an excellent Christmas or birthday present, from the teacher's point of view its value lies particularly in its potential for stimulating the interest of older children and in providing basic information on selected subjects. Used with skillful texts, under the guidance of a skilled teacher, it could open the door to a prolonged interest in natural history.

Neil Arnold, is a primary school teacher and his selection is especially suitable for children around the middle school age group. The text concen-

Introductory chapters give guidance to places where animals can be seen and on the basic characteristics of the groups to be covered. A number of the groups of the temperate zone, such as those of the temperate butterflies and moths, may be distinguished, the life cycles and feeding habits of the animals understood. Also included are hints on finding and catching insects, identifying and observing mammals and birds, migration, tracks, and modifications of birds' beaks and feet. Finally, two ecosystems, an upland tree and a downland, are exemplified.

Mr Arnold's approach is conversational and interesting. An index is lacking, but there are a lot of good illustrations, many in colour, as well as suggestions for further reading.

.....

## Flights of fact

The 12 chapters commence with evolution and classification. Obviously, the latter has required much judicious pruning, but there is enough to convey some understanding of the features used to distinguish the orders and important families. A comprehensive bibliography is included at the end. Anatomy and flight have also attained chapter status, while comprehensive physiological information on, for example breathing, respiration,

feeding, nutrition and the special senses, is also provided. A discussion of migration and behaviour is virtually essential in any book of this kind though to cover all aspects would be inappropriate. There is, however, enough to whet one's appetite and provide an introduction to these important areas. Mr Freethy has limited the use of technical language and included relevant background information which will help his audience to comprehend some of the more complicated ideas.

This is a well-illustrated little volume which amply qualifies for inclusion in the senior section of the school library. Keen lay birdwatchers, who don't have specialized knowledge of the subjects covered, should also find it worth reading.

PJB

## Jumping genes

This popular and comprehensive American first year college text has undergone a major revision for the latest edition. There are 67 new diagrams and photographs, many in colour, while other items have been redrawn. Information has been brought right up to date, and there has been some textual reorganization. Scientific methods now have a prominent place in the introduction. Previously scattered items on cell biology and physiology have been brought together, and there is a new chapter on eukaryotic organization, which includes

Items on DNA sequencing, cloning, split and "jumping" genes, as well as a discussion of genetic engineering prospects. Two new pieces on cancer biology have been introduced and the book includes information on the origins of life and human neurophysiology, revised and enlarged. Redundant topics have been dropped.

This text is very comprehensive and contains a vast amount of introductory information. In this respect it goes considerably beyond A level, though it isn't geared to our syllabus. As a school level course book, Kimball may be a little expensive and slightly expensive but as a reference book it represents excellent value.

**P J E**

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**Peter J. Baron**



## RESOURCES

## notes

## GO-KART GO

Good news for racing drivers of the future. Castrol and NatSKA (the National School Karting Association) have just brought out "The NatSKA Guide to Karting", a step-by-step guide to building a kart and taking it into competition under the association's supervision. About 200 schools in the country already have kart projects, but for the uninitiated the guidebook also gives details of the association and how to form a kart club school. For further information about the guidebook or NatSKA, contact Brian Ensley, Castrol Press Office, 10 Daughtry St, London WC1P 2PL (tel 01-631 6131).

## COLOUR AND READ

Doublebee colour end read posters offer an entertaining pastime for 9 to 12 year-olds. Two pastars are "The Normans in Britain" and an "Egyptian Life Crossword". The first provides pictures of soldiers and peasants, lords and ladies, castles and farms, ships and weapons. Interspersed with interesting little paragraphs about each. The second has almost 100 clues - with answers - about the ancient Egyptians, this time with pictures of Egyptian people and objects. For further information about these and others, contact Doublebees, 17 Castle View Park, Mewen Smith, Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 5HB (tel 0326-250787).

## NEGATIVE RESPONSE

The Royal Photographic Society are very puzzled. Photography is clearly on the increase in schools, with a growing number of clubs and media classes. Yet

encourage pupils or was July 16 just too late for announcing the competition? The organizers are not sure, but next year they will push harder by making a bigger noise much earlier.

Music for Classroom Ensemble  
By Jean Allison  
Price £9.95  
Quickstep Music, 59 Ladywell Avenue, Edinburgh.  
Practice and Play: Pop Music Packs  
Audiocassette pack £6.95; computer pack £25  
Solar Sound Ltd, Llanrhystud, Dyfed.

Music teachers are no strangers to making up their own classroom resources, since few of the recognized publishing houses have come up with a formula which is both interesting and flexible. The authors of the above packs have not only thoroughly tested and developed their material "in the field", but have gone so far as to set up their own publishing operations to market the results. Both ventures are marked by inventiveness and integrity.

Quickstep Music publishes loose-leaf packs for classroom use. Each consists of a full score and a set of parts: eight melody parts (two in B flat); 12 tuned percussion parts (four each of three different lines); four bass/guitar parts; a piano accompaniment (intended for the teacher) and brief teacher's notes.

The music is all original, in a light jazz mood - ragtime, tango, rumba, foxtro, bossa nova, beguine, etc. One each piece comes with a few verses of original lyrics. Teachers might have reservations about the unrelenting cocktail bar sound, but a strong stylistic flavour is no bad thing.

Style can often get lost at the expense of technical simplicity. So Allison has skillfully constructed the music to support melody and accompaniment lines which lie easily for recorders, clarinets or strings and tuned percussion, while retaining some harmonic sophistication in the piano part. The whole is sufficiently "neutral", however, to adapt to almost any combination of instruments.

Sometime in November the Home Office and the Department of Trade and Industry will announce the winners in Round One of the cable race. Up to 12 interim franchises and licences will be awarded for the building of 12 new local cable networks with a maximum of 100,000 potential subscribers.

The following month, the second round of a bid, yet to be named, will take place at Westminster. Once real, it will herald the birth of a new Cable Authority to oversee cable development in the UK, with local potential subscriber areas of 500,000 of the population. Getting post-legislative franchises and licences will be Round Two of the cable race.

What is cable? Our telephones are connected to cable, coaxial cable. We speak into the telephone, our message is transformed into electrical impulses, fed through cable to the other end and transformed back into information we recognize. That could be telephone voice communication, it could also be a radio programme, it could be television or it could be data - just, but not simply, information. The first three are "low tech" really. We've had international telephone networks for over a century, cable radio since the 20s and cable television since the 30s. The former grew from the need for speed of communication, the latter from the problems of programme reception in areas where transmitters failed to deliver good sound and pictures over the air.

While everyone is getting more or less excited about new, improved cable television in terms of lots of new programme channels bearing sport, feature films, local news, children's channels and music, the real reason d'être behind it all is information.

"Cable television," says the Government, "will be privately financed and entertainment led", but what follows is the wired society, where information of all kinds will whizz across the country.

Possibly you, and most certainly your pupils will, if all goes according to plan.

by it, an average morning's shopping conducted courtesy of it. Home security, home-based employment, home-based education will rank equal if not greater than home entertainment. And we'll be selling it abroad. The wired society is to be our major

be to use the rhythm box of an electronic keyboard, at least to begin with. There is an attempt to cater for a wide range of playing ability, though the arrangements are sufficiently "open" to admit more complex parts should the teacher wish to write them. The arrangements are nominally designed for secondary level (12-14 and 14-16 years) but a good number of primary schools could have sufficient resources to cope.

Centyn Evans developed his Practice and Play cassette packs to combat the problems of solitary practice for children learning an instrument. The idea of cassette-based accompaniment is not original, but this exploits the medium to a greater extent than most. The audio version consists of a cassette tape and a music book with six popular tunes like "Amazing Grace". Reservations about triteness should be balanced against advantages of familiarity. The tunes have been carefully selected to present a controlled mixture of technical simplicity and difficulty. There are a number of suggestions for repeating selected bars. Surprisingly, there is not (yet) a facility to cater for transposing instruments.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of the system is that it presents a simple and non-threatening introduction to computer-based instruction for music teachers. The program has been developed by Specialist Business Software Ltd.

The recorded arrangements are unashamedly up to date and blatantly witty, using drum machine, electronic keyboards and synthesizer. Pupils will

## CABLE connexions



Two weeks ago a panel was appointed to advise the Government on the selection of up to 12 pilot cable television licences. Their verdict is due in November. This week Felicity Grant looks at the background to cable television and the information service it could provide.

contribution to the balance of pay-

1977 Annan Report on the Future of Broadcasting had suggested there might be a cable network by the turn of the century, an orange document appeared. Called Report on Cable Systems, it was the product of the Cabinet Office Information Technolo-

gy Advisory Panel. Its opening two paragraphs said: "Modern cable systems, based on coaxial cables or optical fibres, can provide many new telecommunication-based services to homes and businesses. The initial attraction for home subscribers would be the extra television entertainment channels. However, the main role of cable systems eventually will be the deliv-

ery of many information, financial and other services to the home and the joining of businesses and homes by high capacity data links.

The UK currently has cable technology capable of providing economically a wide variety of interactive services, but commercial cable operations, based on the relay of conventional TV broadcasts, are declining and unless firm policy decisions towards cable are taken in 1982, there is a high risk of overseas technological dominance.

The Cabinet took heed and it was a short hop from there, via a public enquiry resulting in the Hunt Report to the publication in April this year of the White Paper, The Development of Cable Systems and Services, expected to enter the statute book in July 1984.

The most sophisticated cable technology in the world has kept pace with all this. True, much of it is still being tested on the bench rather than underground but, as I write, fully interactive, optical fibre cable networks are ready for go. Optical fibre is new, improved cable. Made from fine glass, it is the diameter of a human hair and can be bunched in quantity to give endless communication channels. It carries information in the form of light impulses generated by laser and very, very fast. Individual homes can not only receive a limitless number of channels and information sources, they can send out information too - individually. And, of course, that applies to businesses as well.

In the cable world of the Cabinet's dreams you will be able to go about your business, run your home, entertain and educate yourself on a thousand topics by simply dialling up programmes from a vast video library which, like a record in a juke box, will play back just to you, just when you want it to. And all from your armchair - or indeed the classroom. Not only will students tune in to individual teaching programmes of all conventional kinds, but as computer literate or computer learners they will in the future turn to cable as receivers and transmitters of information on a scale beyond the imagination of the ordinary, primitively educated adult.

The core curriculum, the computer curriculum, the cable curriculum - to be forewarned is to be forearmed. The wired society is upon us.

Next week: cable television in community education.

## Maths measure

First Maths. By Michael Holt, Andrew Rothery, Barbara Brough  
Hart-Davis Educational  
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Book J 0 247 13261 0  
Book K 0 247 13262 8  
Book L 0 247 13263 6  
Each is a set of ten plus teacher's leaflet.

A feature of the best mathematics schemes is, ironically, that they help the teacher to become independent of all such schemes. Through studying the teacher's resource book, devising activities for the children, integrating the use of the workbooks with activities, the teacher gains knowledge of how mathematics is learnt and gains confidence as a mathematics educator. As time goes on the teacher needs to rely less on the scheme and can work more from an understanding of the children and of mathematics.

Another feature of the best schemes is that the activities proposed should involve the children in mathematical thinking and should lead them towards some mathematical understanding. It is important that they should perceive links between what they are asked to do in mathematics and what they already know about the world. They should use these links to help them think and learn.

Producers of a good scheme should also aim to cover a wide range of mathematics (not just number); to reassure the teacher who fears mathematics; to prevent the lazy teacher from relying solely on chil-

dren's workbooks... the list could go on for ever. So how does First Maths measure up to the standards of a good scheme? The answer, I'm afraid, is bad.

The scheme consists of 12 sets of children's workbooks, each set accompanied by a leaflet entitled "Teaching Notes". These notes contain brief notes for preliminary activities, brief notes on using the workbook, such as "The children should enjoy working on these pages more or less on their own", and equally brief suggestions for follow-up activities. They get for explanation to the teacher why these activities could be worth doing, what their purpose is, which children they might be appropriate for, what to do if a child cannot do them. So the scheme has failed to the first test - the teacher is not encouraged to learn from using it.

On the second test the scheme also fails - it is quite possible that it will not help children to acquire mathematical understanding. They may learn to understand, they may even learn to do, but they will not learn to think. The draw arrows between objects of the same colour. But I would not want to do that simple task. Nor would I want to do that 7 and 3 must make 10 because, as they already know, 8 and 2 make 10.

We want children to gain insight into number, not acquire a facility with symbols that bears no relation to their understanding. And I fear that these workbooks will encourage the children to do the latter.

Fran Mosley

## EXTRA

## FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

In May 1983, a copy of the DES/ WO Consultative Paper on Foreign Languages in the School Curriculum was sent to every second school (i.e. a and independent) in England and Wales. (Further copies can be obtained from Room 3/96, DES, Elizabeth House, York Road, London SE1 7PH, or from the WO Education Department in Cardiff.)

The deadline for comments is 31 October, but the DES "will accept" responses sent in by 31 December: we shall have any ourselves to blame if we miss this opportunity to contribute to the form and content of a statement of national policy on FL (560), which will, for years to come, be a reference for i.e.s. head teachers and others whose decisions influence FL teaching in our schools.

The most effective form of response would be for FL departments and local groups of FL teachers (working ad hoc, or within the framework of the language associations) to discuss, draft and send in a joint statement.

The Consultative Paper raises matters that foreign linguists have been asking about for years: "the issues set out below are not in the main new ones" (512).

What is new, is that the Secretaries of State (at the DES and the WO) are, in effect, asking foreign linguists: what should the Government be saying to chief education officers and head teachers about foreign languages?

CEOs and heads will not be waiting weekly to be told what to do: their (largely non-linguist) voices will be heard too, and strongly, in the consultation process. This is why it is essential that foreign linguists speak now, could we forgive ourselves for letting the following points from the paper be lost, for lack of support? - CE national competence in FL needs to be more like that of other member countries of the EC. The policies of i.e.s. and schools should support this aim" (57).

Too few school leavers, especially boys, have a reasonable proficiency in a FL (518). "It is very desirable that other European languages as well as French be widely available to schools" (531); "The place of a second FL in the 11-16 curriculum needs urgent attention" (535).

"Examinations at 16-plus must be adapted to serve the language studies of those pupils for whom they are designed" (548); and "Further thought needs to be given to the best means of enabling pupils to make contact with native speakers of the language studied" (553).

Also regarded as a "major issue of policy" is "the possible postponement

of the start of FL learning for some pupils to age 12, 13 or 14" (529): what a gift to curriculum planners looking for a chance to bring in some more studies, or another "ology". The "issue to be decided" here is whether we are justified in making the start as late as 11.

1. The first FL in the 11-16 curriculum. The tentative suggestion that "more pupils, say 50-60 per cent, should continue their FL study for longer" (527) is to be welcomed if: (a) it means until at least 16-plus; and (b) it is the first step of a staged programme for the introduction of FL courses for all pupils from 11 to 16 and beyond.

2. Languages other than French, and the second FL. These two related issues occupy a key position in FL policy and planning. The paper rightly calls for an increase in the proportion of examination entries at 16-plus for languages other than French, and suggests that "a national target of, say, one third should be set" (531) - the present figure is one quarter of all FL entries. (The idea of setting national targets is the right approach, for many aspects of FL provision.) If even this modest target is to be achieved, it must be made quite clear to sixth-form teachers, careers advisers, and FL departments in higher education, that any intending FL teacher should be advised to study one (or more) language other than French, plus French, and not two (or more) languages without French.

A lasting diversification of the languages studied in schools would be achieved if each i.e.s. implemented a policy of having a language other than French as the first FL in some of the schools in its area; useful case studies can be found in the 1981 Schools Council study of Languages other than French in the secondary school (referred to in 532).

On the second FL in schools, expectations in the Paper are far too low, despite earlier references to other West European countries where "further FLs are often taken by those who are not intending to specialise in FLs" (56). The idea that many secondary schools cannot provide more than one FL must be firmly refuted, by reference to specific case studies. It is unfortunate that the Paper makes no mention of the 1982 Schools Council study of The second foreign language in secondary schools: a question of survival. It should be national policy that in all schools with at least a 5-form entry, two or more FLs should be available.

3. Syllabuses and examinations. Implementation of the proposals for a common examining system at 16-plus is long overdue: criteria (based on French, but valid for other FLs) have been worked out; consortia of examining boards have been developing syllabuses and schemes of examination; many FL teachers, trained to teach practical language skills, are annually

continued

David Nott  
on new moves  
towards a  
national policy

There are already schools where more than 60 per cent of pupils follow FL courses from 11 to 16, and others where all pupils do so. These schools should serve as models for the rest, the future "statement of national policy" should include a number of case studies, showing how this provision is achieved, and how each school has succeeded in resisting the "many other pressures on curriculum time" (527).

The Consultative Paper is heartened on this issue: although we are told that "The position (of FL in our schools) is the more disturbing by contrast with most other West European countries (where) throughout secondary schooling one FL is obligatory" (56), the case for all pupils beginning to learn a FL is as obvious as it is well known. The "major issues if it were still one of the 'major issues' of policy to be decided" (529). On the contrary, the "case" to be decided is whether any pupil should be denied the educational opportunities offered by learning a FL.

Also regarded as a "major issue of policy" is "the possible postponement

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EXTRA

## Words or deeds?

continued

disincentive to find that their pupils' proficiency in these skills is seriously under-rewarded in many CSE, and in all GCE, FL examinations.

At 18-plus, reform of A level syllabuses is proceeding in piecemeal fashion: only one examining board appears to have paid attention to the report of the French 16-19 Study Group (French 16-19: a New Perspective, Hodder and Stoughton, 1981) "National policy" at this level should be to encourage schools to provide syllabuses that require practical language work using authentic materials, and examinations that reward such work.

FL provision for non-specialists, that is, the majority, in the 16-19 age range is often sketchy or non-existent: here, a national policy must be devised almost from scratch. It should include: restoration of the FL requirement for entry to higher education (abolished in 1967, at the time of our second application to join the EC...); introduction of an intermediate level examination (appropriate FL syllabuses for this could be drafted almost overnight); the staged introduction of an FL component in all 16-19 education (perhaps assessed by course work assignments, rather than examination).

4. Foreign language assistants. Instead of being regarded as part of a school's teaching staff establishment, the FL assistant should be seen as a technical assistant, as essential to FL work as laboratory assistants for practical work in science.

Some means must be found now, without waiting for a national policy to be formulated, of increasing the numbers of FL assistants coming to this country, in order to avoid reticulation by the French and German authorities against every prospective British assistant whose grant-paying I.e.a. does not offer places in schools in its area to FL assistants from abroad.

5. Teacher supply. On (DES) paper, the shortage of FL teachers in recent years has apparently now disappeared: "The supply of FL teachers has improved" (1985). What has happened in (school) reality is that demand for FL teachers has fallen: not simply through falling rolls, but also because little by little, the place of FLs in the curriculum of school after school has been eroded. Classes are no longer given the opportunity to study the first FL for a third year, or to begin a second FL, for example. (Sometimes, it must be said, these cuts are accepted by FL teachers who feel ill-prepared to work with certain groups.)

More FL teachers must be brought into the system, not fewer, in order to restore the cuts in FL provision, and to enable the aims implied or stated in 86-7 of this Paper to become reality. The kindest thing to do with the idea that "some teachers, who do not have a formal qualification in a FL, nevertheless know it sufficiently well to make a valuable contribution to teaching it, especially in oral and conversational work" (1985) would be to forget it. It stands in direct contradiction to the foreign and cogent description given in 145 of "work of quality" in FL, and of the demands this makes of teachers. For many classes, particularly in years



More FL teachers must be brought into the system.

4-7, "oral and conversational work" is indeed neglected and kept separate from the rest of the FL courses.

The remedy for this is not, however, to hand I.e.o.s a ready-made opportunity to employ inadequately-qualified teachers (no doubt to teach lower attaining pupils), but to reform examination syllabuses so as to make such an approach counter-productive in terms of results.

The approach of this Paper to the supply of FL teachers contrasts

markedly with that adopted in *Science education in schools: a Consultative Paper* (OES/WO, June 1982), where one reads that "access to essential science subjects has been unduly restricted; and shortages have been hidden by the use of teachers inadequately qualified in these subjects. (...) the approach outlined in this paper would require many more science teachers because it would involve more pupils in, and provide more time for, science" (1982).

David Nott is Lecturer in Modern Languages at the School of Education, University College of North Wales, and is currently Chairman of the British Association for Language Teaching.

## Dream into reality

Christine Wilder introduces the 1984 JCLA Course/Conference

The programme is now available for the 1984 Course/Conference organized by The Joint Council of Language Associations in conjunction with the University of Exeter at Exeter on March 24-26.

This event has now firmly established itself as the major annual forum for those interested or active in language teaching at all levels. Next year the organisers, encouraged by the success of the past two conferences, are offering for higher numbers and a broader range of interests by offering alternative activities in plenary sessions and workshops. These, together with talks arranged by the Association of Teachers of Russian, and a series of publishers' workshops by authors and editors of new and established courses coming throughout the three day conference, will enable participants to plan their own programme from the way on so items on offer.

The main theme will be *Communication - dream into reality*, and in the keynote session Professor Ted Wragg (School of Education, University of Exeter) will examine a curriculum for the future; other speakers will address themselves to the question of how communication can be made a reality, both in a broader European context and in the ordinary British classroom where the foundation has to be laid. A forum led by two deputy head teachers, Peter Bush (Hillside Park School), Eileen Holly (Cambridge College, Leicester), and Barrie King, chairman of the National Association of Language Advisers will aim to air the problems and solutions of teaching foreign languages across the ability range. Further plenaries will discuss whether the second foreign language can be taught communicatively, demonstrate activities

for increasing language awareness and offer practical ideas for keeping communication flowing and meaningful in the classroom.

Smaller group workshop sessions, mainly on the communication theme, will cater for a wide range of interests. Topics will include getting the best out of exchange visits, tape links, communicative testing, communication in international management and BTEC courses, devising materials for fast and slow learners, using library resources, using dictionaries, tutor training for adult education and computer workshops. Talks on literary or linguistic subjects will be given by native speakers in their own languages.

A conference such as this aims to help teachers to keep abreast of developments in all areas. This will be the first large gathering of language teachers since the publication of the OES consultative paper *Foreign Languages in the School Curriculum* and, although too late for the October deadline for response, there is no doubt that several of the issues raised for discussion will be debated and formulated into resolutions for publication. Participants will also have the opportunity to discuss new developments in A and I Level examinations and to update themselves on the current activities of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research and the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges.

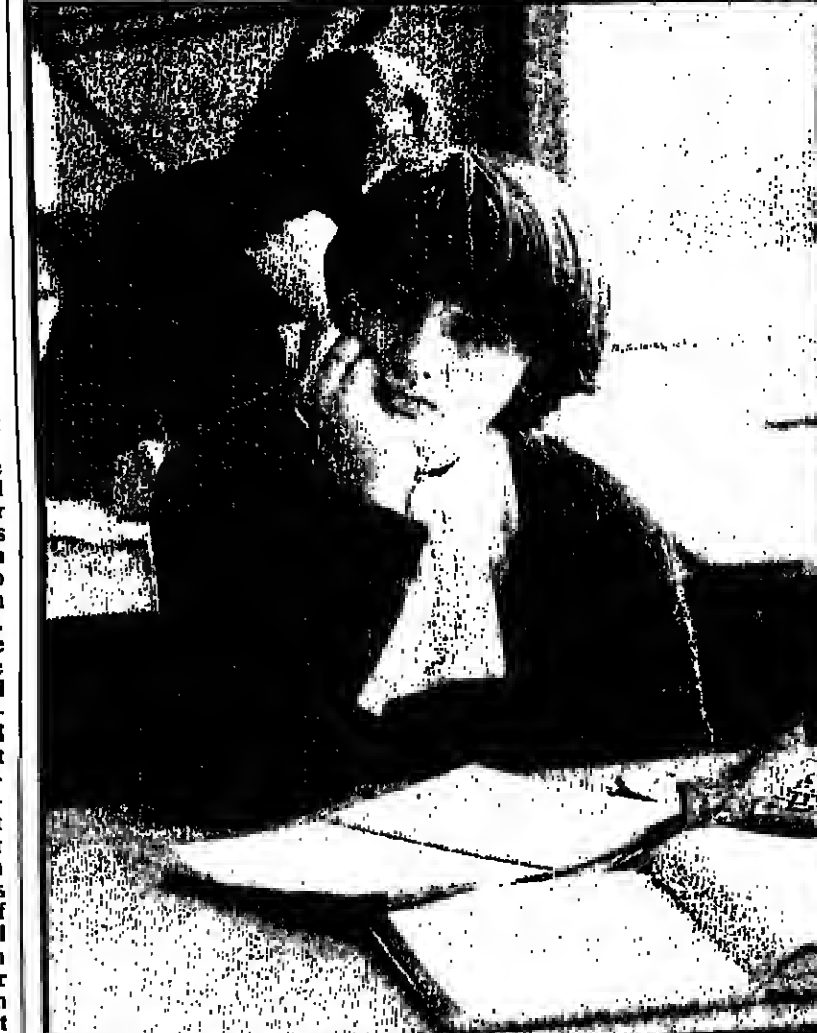
The exhibition of language teaching materials now extended over the three days will enjoy the spaciousness of a purpose-built exhibition hall and offer opportunity to participants and the public to view a large selection of items and to talk to publishers and authors. The increased space available will enable the exhibition to enlarge its

scope to include materials for EFL, computer software, school travel firms, examination boards and any other items which might be of interest. For the first time teachers - individuals and groups - are encouraged to come forward and display their own unpublished materials or graded tests: a crate of wine will be awarded to the best exhibit.

It is expected that the event will have strong support from the south west and arrangements have been made for non-residents. Resident participants will have to book for the full duration of the conference from Saturday to Monday and will be offered the option of accommodation on Friday night. Friday evening entertainment will be provided by the Exeter based theatre in education company, Box to Box, and workshop sessions on Saturday morning prior to the official opening will ensure that early arrivals are not left with time on their hands! The programme, however, provides for relaxation on both evenings. The guest speaker of the annual JCLA dinner will be Professor Henry Widdowson (Department of English for Speakers of Other Languages, Institute of Education, London). His presence will again open the dialogue between languages - a step which has been welcomed by participants at recent conferences.

The organizers, aware of the disappointment experienced by many last year whose applications had to be returned through a lack of accommodation, are confident that, next year, provided bookings are received early, there will be sufficient accommodation available for all who wish to attend.

In order to encourage participation



by young teachers, it has been decided to continue the practice of waiving the course fees (but not accommodation costs) to PGCE students and teachers in their first two years of teaching who are attending their first JCLA Conference.

For conference programme and other enquiries write/phone: JCLA at CILT, 20 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AP. (01 839 2626).

For enquiries concerning commercial exhibition space only phone Barbara Brookes, Educational Publishers' Council 01-580 6321.

Christine M. Wilder is JCLA Conference Administrator

# FESTIVAL OF LANGUAGES AND YOUNG LINGUISTS' COMPETITION

Introduced by Eric Brown and Martin Ash

The results of two years' discussion and planning are finally awaited this autumn when the first Young Linguists will be selected from the contestants entered by schools in Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset. This will be followed in February by a festival of language-related activities and projects open to parents and the general public at which the Young Linguists will receive their awards.

This new event, which aims to raise the level of motivation in pupils learning foreign languages, and the public image of language skills in general, owes much to the initiative taken by John Tim, Director of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT). In drawing the attention of language associations and other bodies to a similar competition held annually in West Germany.

The German competition, sponsored by West German Industry (Stiftung der deutschen Wirtschaft), encourages young people to learn languages, even as an extra-curricular activity - and to build up an understanding of the socio-cultural background of the countries concerned. Contestants have to know at least two languages, though some entrants display ability in five.

In April 1982, representatives of language associations, cultural institutes, the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges, the

National Association of Language Advisers, the Schools Council, Her Majesty's Inspectorate, the Confederation of British Industry and the National Westminster Bank considered the German competition and saw it as a stimulus to devising a similar event in Britain which would not only reward individual excellence but, through the festival, involve the whole ability range.

Details of the competition and festival have been worked out by a small committee chaired by Dr Betty Farr. In spite of the problem presented by the smaller number of schools now offering two foreign languages, it was decided that (since the competition aimed to increase motivation to learn languages) the title of Linguist could not be suitably accorded to anyone knowing less than two languages. Excellence or interest in individual languages, however, will have its chance to be rewarded in the festival for which entries may be submitted by groups or individuals and may include any activity from, for example, short dramatic presentations to a display of projects arising from a school exchange visit.

The event will become national in 1984 and it is hoped it will attract entries from both the private and maintained sectors in Secondary Schools and Colleges of Further Education. Meanwhile, thanks to the interest and support of South West

members of the National Association of Language Advisers, the competition and festival are currently being piloted in Gloucestershire, Somerset and Avon.

For the pilot project, five schools in each authority have been invited to take part and round one, in which contestants had to submit two essays (one in each language) on topics of their choice followed by interviews in the foreign language on the topics, has been conducted internally in the schools. The contestants selected now go forward to the second and, to the case of the pilot, the final round, which will take place in November.

Since writing was tested in round one, the final round will principally test speaking, listening and reading skills in an inter-related situation, marks being awarded not only for accuracy of language but also for non-verbal communication, initiative and confidence in dealing with a situation in a foreign language, and in achieving the objectives of the transaction.

This obviously reflects the ethos behind language options offered by the Business Education Council - language in action, in situations which a 16-19-year-old might well be expected to come across. However, whereas BEC naturally inclines towards a business situation, the type of situation for the Young Linguist will be more

general - for example, involvement in organizing a school exchange, town twinning, or a personal visit - and, thus, it is hoped that neither an A level student nor a student continuing language studies in some other way will be deterred from competing.

Within the framework of a prescribed situation, finalists may have to telephone, understand letters, abstract information from brochures, undertake informal liaison interpreting, make small talk or even give a speech of welcome or thanks. The tests will take place over a day, though some material may be sent in advance. On this occasion, the languages entered will be French, German and Spanish but it is strongly hoped that other languages will be represented in the festival.

Naturally for this competition to be organized on a national scale, considerable financial backing is required, not only for the actual administration, but also to enable students to travel to regional centres for the competition. The pilot project has engaged Mrs Christine Wilder as the part-time co-ordinator for it was felt that the project should not be entirely dependent on the goodwill of volunteers. In spite of this, the enthusiastic support and voluntary effort of a large number of teachers and advisers will be required to ensure its success. And with its new and imaginative approach, the

competition and festival seem to have very positive support from a number of bodies who have to date provided prizes, scholarships and finance. These include National Westminster Bank, Rowntree Macintosh, The Foundation for European Language and Educational Centres in Zurich, The Commission of the European Communities, the Cultural Department of the French Embassy, the Spanish Institute, the Italian Institute, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Aston Martin Languages Club, Cambridge University Press, Macmillan, European Schoolbooks, Edward Arnold, Hodder and Stoughton, Educational, George Harrap and Son and Mary Glasgow Publications. Any further offers of sponsorship should be addressed to Eric Brown at CILT 20, Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AP (01-839 2626).

The Festival of Languages and Young Linguists' Competition was launched; let us hope that future expansion can be assured and that their success will achieve for languages what similar competitions have already done in other fields. Further information about the Festival and Competition may be obtained from Eric Brown at CILT.

Martin Ash is ML Adviser for Gloucestershire.

## Book review

### It has no rival

A Reference Grammar of Modern French. By Ann Judge and F G Hesley. Edward Arnold £35.00. 0 7131 6285 6.

A Guide to Contemporary French Usage. By R E Batchelor and M H Offord. Cambridge University Press £4.95. 0 521 28037 0.

Surely the biggest and most comprehensive language grammar is the best: isn't it? In fact, it is. The Judge/Hesley Reference Grammar is a superb work, authoritative, scholarly and sensitive to linguistic theory; it has no rival in English in its field; but it will provide more than just an excess of riches to the less-advanced student who merely wants to check the use of the subjunctive and is offered 25 pages on the actual reality or non-reality of events and the fine lines between the probable and the possible, the improbable and the impossible: the one

distinct probability is that he will end up understanding less than he did before and there is an actual possibility that he will be sickened by the whole business and never dare to use a subjunctive again.

This, then, is a book for the private case; access to be restricted to professors, teachers and properly accredited students who will delight in its disclosures of the more perverse refinements of French linguistic behaviour. My one complaint would be the language of its index, despite the full table of contents, which makes it more difficult to use than *Orevisse's Le Bon Usage*.

In any event, the price of the Reference Grammar should ensure that it will not fall into the wrong hands and A level students may be tactfully steered towards *Batchelor and Offord's Guide* which will impart such concepts as register to lay terms and without excessive offence to their sensibilities. The presentation is imaginative (for example the use of wheel diagrams to illustrate semantic clusters like *dinner, accorder, décider, conférer*) and the authors manage to pack an extraordinary amount of information into the book without any feeling of congestion. There are some omissions (*une vérité de La Palice* is, but not *le mot de Cambronne*), some errors ("optional service" is *service militaire* rather than *national*, *Ovid* was not Greek) and some redundancies (on the lists of countries and their adjectives, to be found in a great deal of common sense and the *Guide* as a whole is just what the post-O level student needs. *It was about 10*

tend my copy to anyone. *Studies in the Romance Verb* is obviously addressed to specialists, but some of the essays will interest teachers of French, Italian or Spanish who are not experts in linguistics (notably Christopher Lyons on French proclitics and Andrew Radford on Italian exclamatives). *L'Apprentissage de l'écrit* applies to approaches to textual criticism to the teaching of discursive essay-writing by the elegance of his theory than by the realities of the classroom, and teachers of French as a second language, even at quite advanced levels, will probably find little here of practical help.

Paul Carroll

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EXTRA

# D'accord

S Moore, A L Antrobus, G F Pugh

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Longman

## 'A much more suitable coursebook'

This comment was made by a head of Modern Languages about French for You by Colin Asher and David Webb. The teacher was already using a new coursebook that used the communicative approach and authentic materials, and which attempted to make the language approachable and relevant to CSE pupils. But still, it proved too difficult for most of his average ability pupils. That's why he's adopted French for You as his CSE coursebook because:

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- \* It has plenty of concise background material with practical and interesting exercises
- \* It uses relevant and approachable vocabulary.
- \* It gives plenty of practice in all 4 language skills
- \* the additional light-hearted exercises prove very popular (pupils actually enjoy using the books)
- \* and most of all — it's "a very welcome breath of freshness" (F.E.S.) to French teaching.

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Confrontation with Napoleon in a London comprehensive classroom.

Photo: Barry & Richard Gowers

## Errare humanum est— even in a foreign language

By Peter Green

When my two-year-old daughter said, "You cui it to me, shall we?", I was delighted at her linguistic prowess and cut up the food on her plate as requested.

When a pupil in my German class says, "Gestern ich bin ins Kino gegangen", I find it difficult to get on with asking about the film until I have drawn attention to the error in word order, and there is little delight on either side.

I am well aware of the immense differences in the two situations — the child is a native speaker, the pupil is not; the child is learning to speak, the pupil is learning to understand; the child is learning to speak, the pupil is learning to understand.

The problem of how to react to learners' errors really starts with knowing what to treat as an error at all. An individual teacher will for the most part confidently identify errors in learners' language, but compare several individual teachers with each other and the confidence is soon dispelled, especially if some of the teachers are native speakers and others not.

In a recent joint study between Munich and York (1), 60 German pupils in their fifth year of learning English wrote replies to a letter from a supposed English penfriend. Three German teachers of English and five English teachers (three of English, one of physics and one of modern languages), independently marked and graded all the letters.

Their disagreement over errors (and grades) was remarkable: between them the eight teachers identified no less than 2,443 different "errors" in the 60 letters — or about 40 errors per letter (of average length 170 words) — but for rather more than half of the errors there was not even majority agreement. The German teachers discovered on average about 35 per cent more errors per letter than the English teachers, but for 12 per cent of the errors they agreed on they received little or no support from their English colleagues. For example, all of the German and none of the English teachers marked the pupil wrong who wrote, "First we drove to the Bodensee".

When it came to judging the gravity of the errors, there were again differences between the native and non-native judges. The German teachers judged errors of grammar more severely, the English errors of vocabulary. Overall, the German teachers were the more severe markers.

The explanation for this common finding, that native speakers are more lenient markers than non-native (2), is probably that they approach the learners' language in the way they have been conditioned to approach any sample of their own language: they expect it to tell them something. They are therefore mainly disturbed by errors affecting meaning, but relatively few errors do (only about 10 per cent in this study).

to approach the learners' language in the way they have usually taught it: they focus mainly on form, because communication of meaning is often simulated and secondary. Not surprisingly, they are more disturbed by errors of form and may even overlook errors of meaning.

Whatever the differences in interpretation, native and non-native teachers probably both set the foreign language learner's performance against that of an imagined native speaker. Since they are adult and academically able, the native-speaker model is also adult and academically able and performs moreover in an idealized (ie, error-free) way.

But how appropriate is such a model? Real native speakers actually performing the same task as the learners may be very different from the ideal, particularly if they match them in age, ability and social background. In the Munich-York study there were such matched native speakers: 46 English pupils of the same age as the German pupils, 23 of them in a grammar school and 23 in a secondary modern school, answered the same letter as the German pupils, only of course in their own language. The similarity of the letters of the weakest pupils on both sides was so great that when a different group of German and English teachers were asked to mark a selection of 10 letters, which were supposedly all written by German pupils but in fact included three written by English pupils, none of the teachers gave any indication of having spotted the impostors and all graded them in the middle of the range.

The reader might like to try to identify which of the sample sentences paired below were written by English pupils, those in roman or those in italic setting (answer at end of article).

How is Peter and Jane?  
I will meet you at the Kings Cross Station.  
Will you meet me at the Victoria Station?  
I can sail a little but not very good.  
I can't sail very good.  
When I went to stay at my Aunt's house in Easter.  
My time in Easter was very nice.  
I will coming over in July.  
I will arriving at 6th August.  
Uschi now wants to become a athlete.  
He had a accident.

Teacher disagreement over errors, the different reactions of natives and non-natives, and the often unrealistic expectations about learners' performance argue for a tolerant rather than a rigorous attitude to error, especially on the part of the non-native teacher. Ironically, however, it is precisely when severity is the appropriate response to error — when meaning is obscured — that the non-native teacher risks being too tolerant.

The non-native often understands what the learner is trying to say when the native might not, partly because

classroom is so contrived that meaning is actually be redundant (leading to such confusing exchanges as: Teacher: Wie heisst du? Paul: Heisst Paul. Teacher: Ich heisse Paul).

This over-tolerance can also apply to errors of pronunciation, which to learners' foreign language, which the teacher understands and perhaps out of weariness comes to accept, may actually be incomprehensible to a native speaker. By "misplaced" comprehension of a non-native teacher arises partly from knowledge of the learner's mother tongue, which a native speaker of the target language may not have.

Thus, in the Munich-York study, the English teachers, except the modern-language teacher, who knew German, were baffled by the pupil who wrote, "Our new English teacher is strong", and recorded a severe error. The German teachers understood the pupil was confusing English (strong) with German (stark) and recorded only a medium error.

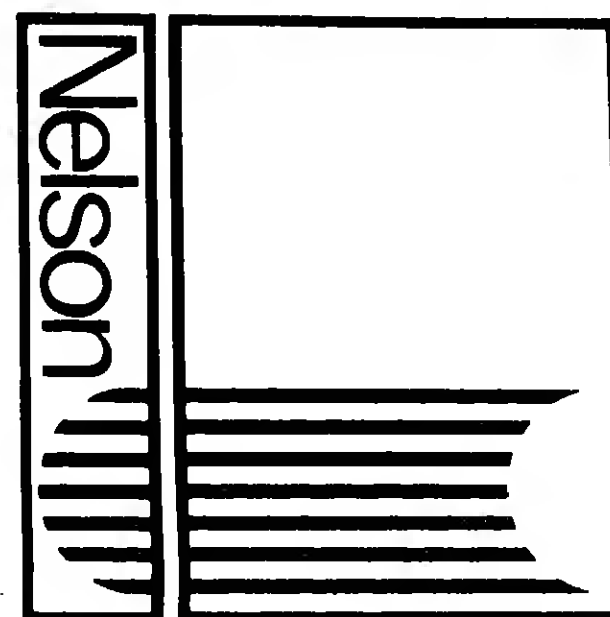
It is all very well to recommend the non-native teacher to listen for meaning like a narrative speaker and be rather tolerant towards error that does not affect it (and perhaps even to display some of the pleasure of a parent at mangled specimens of the language that actually say something, but how will the pupil who says, "Gestern ich bin ...", ever learn the correct form, *Gestern bin ich ...*?

Let us assume that the simple format rule (of inversion of subject and verb when some other word of phrase opens the sentence) has already been "taught" (ie, explained and practised). The problem may not be a failure to learn the rule, because it is often sufficient for the teacher to pause, frown, make a gesture or in some other way indicate unhappiness with the way the pupil has switched from meaning to form.

The problem is rather that the pupil has not yet learned to apply the rule while attending to meaning, and a correction is unlikely (as we well know from bitter experience but had to learn to accept) to inhibit a re-occurrence of the error in spontaneous speech. With the error in spontaneous speech, it may inhibit the pupil's willingness to engage in any real communication in the foreign language, and a great deal of that is needed if the pupil is to acquire a feel for correct form by encountering them frequently in meaningful use.

(1) Karlheinz Hecht & Peter S. Green, *Fehleranalyse und Leistungsbeurteilung im Englischunterricht der Sekundarstufe I*, Verlag Ludwig, Augsburg, 1979, pp. 80-81, p. 161.

(English pupils in the roman setting, Peter S. Green is Director of the Language Teaching Centre, University of York.



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EXTRA

## VRAI OU FAUX?



- ☐ 1. Seulement les deux premières chaînes de la télévision française diffusent de la publicité.
- ☐ 2. Les deux expressions tomber dans le lac et être dans le lac veulent dire la même chose.
- ☐ 3. Henri Lecomte, Yannick Noah et Thierry Tulasne s'intéressent tous les trois au même sport.

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## Foreign languages at an Intermediate level (17-plus)

For the last four years a project at York University has been working with the language requirements of non-specialist linguists in mind.

## Introduction

By Anthony Peck

Everybody knows that the Sixth Form is the crowning glory of an English School. Its pupils study more deeply and intensively than anywhere abroad; its teachers teach at what elsewhere is a University level. All would be well if the Sixth Form still consisted of a homogeneous group of potential undergraduates. It does not any longer! Unnoticed by the Examining Boards, undreamed of by the Universities, the Sixth Form has become comprehensive. Sixth Formers and their needs have changed; the provisions of the school curriculum have not. Language departments, with their need for self-justification, ignore their changing clientele at their peril.

## Who are the pupils?

Two new groups of Sixth Formers can be distinguished.

● Pupils who were reasonably proficient in a foreign language up to the age of 16, and who would have been capable of continuing to study it as a major subject, but who wish to specialise in other areas, such as science.

● Pupils who have achieved perhaps only a poor-to-adequate command of a foreign language up to the age of 16, and who wish to continue to study it as a major subject, but who wish to specialise in other areas, such as science.

Meeting the needs

The project's first task was to define a syllabus. It has been derived from an analysis of the skills to be of practical usefulness to young people who wish to practise and improve their foreign language communicative proficiency for use in situations likely to be encountered abroad during short visits. It is also based on an analysis of how to establish and improve students' communicative base, prior to their pursuing academic objectives embodied in public examinations, commonly taken at the age of 18. The syllabus can, therefore, represent to some extent a "waystage" on the way to A level or higher grade examinations. This syllabus embodies what we call "an Intermediate Level".

The needs of the second group of pupils will be met by what we propose to call "a Pre-Intermediate Level".

A new qualification

Having developed a Defined Content Syllabus, we prepared an examination. Three generations of pupils have taken it in French, and two generations in German; all from schools attached to the project. The examination is now generally available.

Since it is likely, in the majority of cases, that students are continuing their language learning in "minority time", the limits of what they can be expected to learn, and consequently the limits of the examination's range, are clearly defined. This means that the teaching course leads towards an examination which is a test of attainment, and not one of general proficiency. This in turn means that the validity of the examination is as high as possible in terms of the content and skills taught.

In the case of the test of Extensive Listening, for instance, this is done by reserving a portion of each interview from the teaching materials to be used in the examination. The content, the variety of language, and the speakers in the examination passage are consequently identical to those provided for teaching. Candidates, however, do not know in advance from which of the interviews their examination text will come.

Teaching materials

Having designed the examination, the working party is developing teaching materials specifically geared to it, and some have already been published by the Language Materials Development Unit.

The material for teaching the skill of extensive listening has been spoken spontaneously by native speakers. It is guided thematically by the questions used in the interview, but it has not been rehearsed, and carries, there-



Materials produced by the project are proving not only relevant but enjoyable and fun to work with.

In the case of intensive listening, the items recorded for the examination are re-combinations of items presented for teaching.

With intensive reading, the texts used in the examination are photographs taken at the same time that the teaching materials were prepared and resemble them in content and style.

The use of an examination for no other purpose than to place the candidates in a rank order and to measure the size of the gaps between them has been specifically rejected by the Working Party. Instead, the aim of the examination is to find out with the greatest possible fairness and objectivity, whether the candidates have learned what they have been taught.

To this end, a high degree of face validity has been achieved, and considerable information about the marking schemes is given in the regulations.

Complete objectivity in assessment is impossible to achieve in an examination administered and marked by individual teachers, despite the precautions described above. A further safeguard is, however, the proposed use of an external examiner who may be a teacher from a neighbouring school preparing candidates for the same examination, or another teacher in the same department.

Certificates are awarded to successful candidates, which resemble those frequently given for graded tests. The syllabus for the examination is printed on the rear of the certificate. This examination is not a recognised qualification — yet. There is, however, nothing to prevent it being adopted by, i.e. a school which may give it a certain currency.

Some materials specifically designed for the Intermediate Level have been published and are available. Until the publishing and publishing programme is complete, however, it will be necessary to prepare candidates with existing, or home-made teaching materials.

A.J. Peck is Director, Language Materials Development Unit, York University.

## A review of Intermediate level materials

## French

The Intermediate project was introduced in King Edward VII School, Sheffield, for those pupils who had enjoyed their French studies up to O level, but who had decided to study sciences rather than arts at A level. It was introduced as a direct result of their request to continue with French for a further year. Because of its popularity, and also because of the relevance of the materials to real life experience in France, it was decided that all French A level pupils should also be given the opportunity to use the materials, and obtain the certificate.

It is the materials which have been produced for oral and aural work which, in my opinion, will prove the most useful to both specialist and non-specialist language students. The materials on French provide the students with the opportunity to debate a variety of issues ranging from: the World, UFO's, through to Why Mary?, or arguments for and against the building of a motorway. For those students studying for A level French, we have found that the subjects have slotted almost miraculously into our thematic approach to language studies. They provide the student with basic information in French about the role he is to play, the point of view he is to support, thus equipping him with a variety of announcements for each situation, and are then asked to explain to a non-French-speaking English companion the relevance of the information to their situation.

Many students used to say that one of the most difficult things to do was to use the telephone to speak to French people; they found the absence of visual stimuli and response disconcert-

ing when they used the telephone for the first time. Hopefully, for our students this will no longer be so, as mock telephone conversations (preferably using the school intercom) form part of the course, together with a useful list of telephone language, including how to ask for extensions, and how to tell the operator that one has been cut off.

Role plays are obviously part of the oral programme, and activities range from how to tell the doctor that you would like treatment for an excess of sun, sea and wine, while arguing with him about the advisability of being confined to your room when you have just been involved in an all-consuming holiday romance, to coping with claims at the Social Security Office. Before students take the roles, they bear a recording of an English person in France, in a similar situation, which thus provides material for discussion and basic vocabulary.

Most students, particularly the non-specialist linguists, will spend considerably more time in listening to French, than in producing it themselves. As with the telephone, there will often be situations where there is an absence of vital stimuli such as announcements at airports, at railway stations, road and weather reports on the radio. Students listen to a wide variety of announcements for each situation, and are then asked to explain to a non-French-speaking English companion the relevance of the information to their situation.

Lastly, but by no means least, in the realm of listening, students have to

By Eileen Velarde

become accustomed to speech which is not "spoken literary prose", but which contains false starts, hesitations and so on, which characterize most everyday speech. A series of interviews have been recorded with a French family, living at present in England, and worksheets have been prepared, at different levels, ranging from the simple *Vrai ou Faux* response, to the *à votre avis...* and *Si vous étiez...* type of question.

It would be wrong to presume that course materials are only provided in two of the skill areas. Reading and writing are equally important, and students are confronted with a wide range of register and material. Both intensive and extensive reading are encouraged, with an interesting set of photos of warnings, advertisements, notices, etc.

It is in the field of letter-writing that most students will be involved in writing in the foreign language. With this in mind, the working party has prepared a series of letters which require a variety of different letters to be written in response, from informal thanks, congratulations or condolences, to formal requests for information, and complaints.

Having used all these materials, some more than others of course, my overwhelming impression has been that they have not only been relevant to my pupils but that they have provided fun and enjoyment for all of us.

Eileen Velarde is Head of Foreign Languages King Edward VII School, Sheffield.

## German

By Paul Gerrard

When the Intermediate Project working party first met in York nearly four years ago, we were sure of two things. First, that we wanted the course and the exam to be designed to be based as far as possible on genuine examples of language use, produced and checked by native speakers, and secondly, that we as a group had to agree on a list of practical skills which we, as teachers, regarded as valid, and which teenagers themselves would see as being worth acquiring. As far as materials went, we would simply have to produce our own, given that for some of the skills, for example, telephoning, little or no published material was available.

ACHTUNG! ACHTUNG! (intensive listening), and BEKANNTMACHUNG (intensive reading) clearly demonstrate our concern for authenticity and practicality. The former contains, on cassette, a series of public announcements which the visitor to Germany might be likely to hear at the airport terminal, at the railway station, in the department store etc. The announcements are in the exact form in which they would be heard, and are recorded by native speakers. A transcript is provided. BEKANNTMACHUNG is a collection of photographs of notices, posters, signs etc. reflecting commercial, cultural and political life in Germany. Each picture comes with questions. The aim of these complementary publications is to train students to listen out, and to look out for vital information which would affect them abroad.

MIT HERZLICHEN GRÜSSEN is

the core material for the single element of written work in the course, letter-writing. It consists of a collection of letters which prompt replies, organized along the lines of particular language functions, eg. expressing thanks/issuing/accepting/declining invitations and apologizing. For extra authenticity, the original letters are both hand and type-written.

Perhaps the two most original items the group has produced have been for the oral part of the course. PROBLEME HABEN WIR ALLE contains role-playing instructions for practising the strategies of negotiation, in such difficult situations as being stopped by the police for jay-walking, or for some minor traffic offence. Each situation is presented in the form of a flow chart, illustrating various alternative strategies which can be adopted by teacher or student. AM APPARAT is the equivalent booklet for the telephoning skill, and not only develops students' ability to handle "telephone" but also their ability to get their message across and achieve the purpose of their call. Both PROBLEME HABEN WIR ALLE and AM APPARAT will be published with accompanying cassettes on which model performances will have been recorded by students in pilot schools and colleges.

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## I-level Materials

continued

bulary phrases expressing certain functions involved in discussion, such as making a suggestion or expressing disagreement, and the student's own individual role. For example, should the new motorway be built between Erlangen and Augsburg? How would you feel about it if you were an elderly widow(er) about to be re-housed, or, alternatively, if you were an inhabitant of a village where lorry traffic would, as a result, be much reduced? Most of the roles in the situations presented could be undertaken by boys or girls, and the number of roles in each situation varies between four and eight. Experience has shown that these simulation exercises provide a novel

and stimulating way of encouraging class discussion with past O level groups.

The THEMEN DER ZEIT materials were developed by a party of teachers of German who visited Münster (Westfalen) and made a series of recordings with a wide variety of local inhabitants, including housewives, teenagers, social workers and drug addicts. The materials are notable, not only for authenticity and spontaneity of the dialogue, but also for their new approach to listening comprehension. Questions, carefully graded according to difficulty, make fully authentic recordings accessible to pupils from a considerable spectrum of linguistic ability. This pedagogical grading makes it possible for teachers to lead students from listening to unrehearsed conversations, to a point

where they can, themselves, discuss the same issues, in the foreign language.

The production of self-made teaching materials, as every practising teacher knows, is enormously time-consuming. The advantages of working in a group are that each of us can specialise in the production of material for a particular skill. If any one of us is tempted to allow his, or her feet to leave the ground, the rest of the group rapidly enforces a more realistic perspective. A considerable range of authentic materials has been produced which we, as a group of working Sixth Form teachers, feel are viable. These materials are to be published by the LMDU after the piloting phase of the project.

Poul Gerrard is Sixth Form German Teacher, Pendleton College, Salford.



A group of the "new" sixth-formers - no longer a "homogeneous group of potential undergraduates". Can language departments meet their comprehensive needs?

## Examining at Intermediate level

## Practical aspects

By Chris Flynn

When a language teacher presents his candidates for a public examination, he is acutely aware that their success or failure depends on their ability to satisfy the rigorous criteria laid down by the Examining Board.

Prose and essay must be grammatically accurate; translation into English will be penalized; answers to written and aural comprehension must be specific and relevant.

Such criteria are clearly valuable and many examiners may deem them indispensable.

For some time, however, there have been reservations about the universal appropriateness of these requirements. Indeed, the variety of language examinations and Graded Tests already reflects the differing needs and aspirations of our students. Where goals are not the same, methods of assessment cannot remain unchanged.

Since the I level course is intended for post O level, non-specialist linguists whose principal concern is to improve their communicative competence, it was felt, from its very inception, that the syllabus should accommodate that concern and concentrate on practical skills. It was on this basis that the constituent elements of the course were selected, and only afterwards was the question of assessment broached.

It became immediately obvious that the excellence demanded in conventional examinations was inappropriate to I level. Successful communication is not exclusively dependent on impeccable grammar, as many stricken-but resourceful tourists can testify. An examiner, therefore, would be asked first and foremost, not to judge the correctness of what was said, or written, but whether or not a native speaker would have been able to comprehend and respond to it: would the candidate elicit the necessary information, achieve the required objective, receive an appropriate reply to his letter.

Clearly there are many levels of communicative proficiency. When it is total or non-existent, the examiner's task is straightforward. When it is

partial, as is most frequently the case, difficulties arise. After all, the point of breakdown may shift according to the perspicacity and disposition of the native speaker, as well as the competence of the candidate. However, the very high degree of unanimity at our moderation meetings suggests that our standards of assessment are well-standardized. Murmurs of dissent are rare.

This does not mean that the conduct of the examinations has been bereft of problems. As with most new ventures, there have been teething troubles, despite attempts to cover all eventualities. Any practising teacher will concede that the capacity for innocent disruption among examination candidates can threaten the effectiveness of the most painstaking preparation.

There are other obstacles, however. The oral sections of the exam, popularly known as "the I level grill", are the most demanding on the examiner. Since the candidate will have prepared ten role-play situations, he may be called upon to assume the mantle of a chemist, an hotel manager, a mechanic, a social security clerk and six others during the course of one day. A convincing "performance" by the examiner, in his role obviously stimulates the candidate to acquit himself well.

It was felt, therefore, that the examiner should not be distracted by the necessity to gauge the quality of the candidate at the same time. For this reason these conversations are recorded and assessed later. Ideally they should take place in a soundproof recording room.

Both the course and the examination strive to be true to life. When testing the candidate's ability to make an arrangement by telephone, however, reality must usually be sacrificed to practicality. Few schools are willing to provide a telephone system for an extended period. A satisfactory alternative is for the examiner and candidate to sit sideways, speaking into the same microphone but averting their eyes, so that nothing may be conveyed by facial expression or gesture. The examiner feels that he

might yield to a gaze of sustained supplication from a floundering candidate, he could perhaps interpose a thin screen or curtain - like a priest in a confessional!

The third oral element, namely participation in a discussion is not tested at the end of the academic year. A series of discussions takes place throughout the year and the candidates are continuously assessed. In any cross-section of society it is reasonable to expect a wide range of personalities, some being forceful and voluble, others diffident and laconic. A class of 16 to 17 year-olds usually shows this diversity. Each student will, of course, be invited to state his opinion initially, but when the debate is thrown open to the floor, so to speak, the self-confident speaker will predominate even though his linguistic ability is not notably superior to that of his classmates. Such a student must be marked accordingly. His taciturn friends cannot be rewarded for what they might have said, had they ventured an opinion.

Of the remaining five items examined, only the letter poses any problems for the examiner. Marking the aural and reading comprehensions is not a complicated process. The candidate's letter is a reply to a stimulus letter which he must respond to. The stimulus letter contains a brief account of how a similar accident befell the candidate's grandmother last year. Either response is acceptable provided the language is comprehensible.

The same principle governs all parts of the examination. Credit is given for accuracy and range of idiom, but any candidate who, in the examiner's view, would achieve his objective will obtain an I level pass. Many should find this a comforting thought.

Chris Flynn is head of modern languages, St Mary's Sixth Form College, Middlesbrough.

EXTRA

## Intermediate level

## An Adviser's View

By Roger Hullcoop

Concern has often been expressed at the comparatively low numbers of students of foreign languages in the 16 to 19 sector, and also at the large number of linguists who cease to study their languages after O level.

The need to provide an opportunity for young people to continue learning languages in the Sixth Form, while specialising in other subjects, is a pressing one, for it is in the production of scientists and economists, confident in their foreign tongue, that we lag behind our overseas colleagues. The demand is there.

When talking recently to Sixth-Formers, the vast majority said that they would have liked the opportunity to continue the study of a foreign language, provided that the objectives were appropriate. Not surprisingly, they placed emphasis on relevant and practical skills. We now also have a second group of youngsters to consider. These are the students who enter the Sixth Form principally because employment opportunities are so poor. They may have an average CSE grade, or they may have come through a system of Graded Tests.

Without doubt, the Intermediate Project can offer further language learning opportunities to this wide range of students by providing practical learning objectives, suitable for those who could have coped with an A level language course, but have opted for something else, and just as valuable, to those who could never have attempted A level, but who have achieved some success already, albeit at a lower level, and who wish to take a foreign language course in the Sixth Form.

The Intermediate Project caters for this wide range of students in a number of ways. The nature of the learning objectives is essentially practical, with an emphasis on oral/aural communication skills. The syllabus has a defined content. The stress is on fluency as well as accuracy, and students can clearly see the relevance of what they are doing. Success can be achieved at different levels. The weaker students can successfully complete the tasks, yet with a much lower level of linguistic fluency than the high flier. There is reassurance for the weaker ones knowing that they will be tested on something they have done, while most of

the topics offer the more able an opportunity to express themselves with as much breadth as they wish. The high flier is able to use his knowledge of the foreign language in essentially practical situations, offering him the opportunity to marshal a range of skills, possibly not developed explicitly at O level, and which can now be applied in a variety of contexts. Enjoyment and success are the keywords for all. In this, the Intermediate Project follows the philosophy of the Graded Tests.

An obvious benefit to Sixth Form teachers is that the department can expand its range of provision and attract into it students with whom it might otherwise not have been involved at all. The language teacher has access to a wide variety of students, scientists for example. It must be desirable for the department to extend thus its sphere of influence in the Sixth Form.

It must be good, too, when a school or college is better able to contribute to the national interest by producing more linguistically competent and motivated students, who will, in the future assume positions of importance and influence, and who may not, as a result, have the negative attitude towards languages and languages learning that many people have today.

The arrival of the Intermediate Project has forced teachers to sit up and take stock of what they are doing with their students. Those who have worked on the project have taken this opportunity, with like-minded colleagues, to take a good look at language learning in the Sixth Form. Able to forget traditional examination criteria, colleagues have concentrated on what the appropriate objectives should be, and what sort of language young people realistically need to learn.

Without doubt, this has affected the teaching of normal A level language classes, and at least one teacher admits to an increase in the amount of practical, communicative type of language used in his lessons.

It is all too easy to get into a groove, where conventional objectives lead to the regular teaching of conventional language. Much modern everyday vocabulary can get overlooked (the fresh and

essentially practical challenges of the Intermediate Project have enabled many colleagues to brush up on their knowledge of colloquial language of the 1980s.

The writing of test items and teaching materials has, I am sure, resulted in colleagues looking more critically at their existing stock, and finding new and more interesting ways of using it. One colleague has even been prompted to write a course book, and through the initial collaboration on the Intermediate Project, a group of teachers has been established, which is both willing and anxious to continue this partnership in a wider field.

There are other tangible benefits of working together on such a project, especially when the resources of the Language Materials Development Unit at York are available. It is clearly useful to come into contact with colleagues from other areas and to learn that others have similar problems to oneself. It has been both interesting and valuable to listen to the pedagogical discussion which has arisen during working party meetings, to hear the ideas which have been generated, the tolerance and sympathy which greets individual problems, and to witness the extremes of frustration and elation which accompany the challenges of difficult tasks. Essentially the story of the Intermediate Project is one of team work with a commitment to contributing, learning and sharing, and enjoying oneself en route.

For the I.e.a. is it immensely encouraging to be well represented on a body working on such an important development. The enthusiasm of working party members is contagious to others at local meetings; consciences are pricked; interest is aroused. The first hand experiences of someone in at the beginning can be brought to the benefit of all, so that the I.e.a. area becomes more quickly aware of new developments and can identify more easily the advantages and disadvantages such a project brings. The Intermediate Project certainly takes a big stride in the right direction, and it is very exciting for Cleveland to be closely involved with it.

Roger Hullcoop is Languages Adviser for Cleveland

## Willing to speak

Christine Wilding on changing attitudes in British business

Reports from the British Overseas Trade Board, Barclays Bank International and the British Export Trade Research Organisation in 1979 delighted language teachers because they offered arguments in favour of languages from embassies and the business world overseas but they appeared to have little immediate effect on British industry and commerce.

A project carried out over the past four years at Aston University to evaluate and collate information on the use of languages in industry and commerce, now detects a change of attitude and an increase in language learning for business purposes. Many firms and individuals are taking the wider range of course available in both the public and private sectors. Colleges and polytechnics have responded to criticism of the rigidity of their course structure, and are now offering the same degree of speed and flexibility as private language schools - often at lower cost. Programmes range from an intensive week per month for those months, to individual tuition at home to suit the client.

Many people learning languages in the past few years have no previous knowledge of the language or are building O levels acquired 20 years ago. They are often engaged in technical or engineering work and certainly did not expect that a language would one day be required. They are learning not only for selling abroad but because the

owned companies in the UK, and multinational projects means the language is needed to communicate with their own colleagues and bosses. Many of them speak English but the British are becoming aware of the increased respect they receive once they show they are willing to speak another language. It is a strong psychological tool.

Teachers in this challenging field are having to acquire new skills and master the complexities of the business world. Combining ESP and recent developments in communicative teaching the best teachers now write their own course material so that the language learnt can be immediately relevant to the learner. A partnership develops between teacher and client in which both draw upon their personal areas of expertise; it is, for example, frequently the learner who can provide the specialist vocabulary.

The best results are achieved when senior management is committed to language training and the company collaborates with the teacher and supports the learner. The forthcoming conference *Getting round the language barrier*, organized by The Institute of Linguists and The British Institute of Management, will take up this point and aim to inform managers of the factors to be considered and the variety of provision for language learning now available.

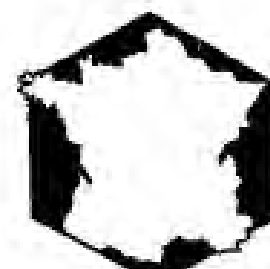
Sometimes languages affect recruitment policy. A few companies teach languages to many types of employee and so consider language examination results when selecting candidates for interview. Many firms recruit language graduates for sales and marketing but there still exists the dilemma of whether one can teach technical knowledge to the linguist or a language to the scientist. It is to be hoped that the eventual introduction of a broader sixth-form curriculum will alleviate this problem.

At school it should be made clear that languages can be used as an ancillary skill in a wide range of jobs. Teachers should ensure that students develop positive attitudes towards language learning and the ability to transfer the technique acquired in learning one language to another. There is a strong case for the study of two foreign languages and this is what the majority of employers seem to prefer when looking for personnel.

Certainly with the increasing competition for jobs a language can sometimes be the skill that finally tips the balance.

Christine Wilding is a part-time research assistant in the department of modern languages, University of Aston in Birmingham. She is also currently coordinator of The Festival of Languages and Young Linguists' Competition, and the JCLA conference and vice-chairman of the Association of Teachers of Italian.

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## EXTRA

## Who needs which language?

Jeffrey Johnson suggests that the most significant changes in what languages are taught should be reserved for higher education.

Unlike the rapid concerted action being taken on microcomputer education, the idea of a national policy on foreign languages remains unrealized. The reasons are contingent on resource and organisational constraints rather than fundamentally educational. Prime among them is the fact that the present heavy investment in teachers qualified only in one foreign language - French - would make any change or diversification extremely expensive.

To this argument can be added a healthy distrust of any central control of the curriculum, as well as the more doubtful contention that to study a foreign language for practical reasons, whether these be commercial, vocational or political, somehow robs the experience of its educational value. But whatever reasons may be put forward for rejecting a national policy on foreign languages, there can be no doubt about the disturbing lack of urgency in current thinking on which languages we should be teaching at all levels in our educational system.

The problem is thrown into relief by a DES survey published this summer which points out that while French is taught at 98 per cent of Britain's schools, German is taught at only 6 per cent and Spanish at only 1 per cent. "A certain fluidity in the pattern of foreign language teaching is discernible," the report concludes, "and it may be asked to what extent the modern languages curriculum is dependent on external political and economic factors... The extent to which circumstances within schools, as well as outside, alter a school's policy may well be a factor in these figures."

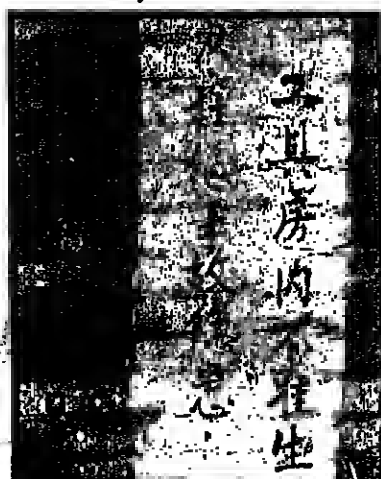
It is not clear from these figures whether the modern languages curriculum, at all levels, more dependent on certain external political and economic factors, we shall soon be following the example of sixteenth century Spain which bequeathed its language to a large empire before drifting into introverted obscurity.

Since English is now the leading international language and likely to remain so, Britain is in a unique position: it can afford to neglect its foreign language teaching where others depend on it for their survival in world markets. It is sometimes asked whether we need to learn foreign languages at all since it is so obvious that the rest of the world enjoys speaking English. On the other hand, Britain's special position gives us the opportunity - at least theoretically - to teach a wider range of foreign languages than any other country.

But how should we decide which languages to teach in our schools and colleges/universities? Unfortunately, as a glance at the literature on the subject will show, such discussions are often clouded with emotional preferences. So it is important to start with a principle on which some will agree, namely that at secondary school level the value of learning a foreign



language - any foreign language - has more to do with helping the learner to find his bearings in the world than with putting him through translation exercises or language lab drills. We can then proceed to base our choice on the cultural, social and economic priorities of our society.



The present hegemony of French in the secondary school curriculum is based almost entirely on cultural precedent. Given the vast influence of French on English language and culture, it must be conceded that the teaching of French should be given priority in the secondary schools. Add to this the geographical proximity of France and the distinctiveness of its way of life and social organization, and the case for retaining it as first foreign language becomes even stronger.

German and Spanish were taught until recently as great languages within the European cultural tradition, but they are now gaining recognition as the principal EEC languages alongside French and their vocational and commercial applications are more apparent than ever before. Therefore there is a strong case for extending the teaching of both languages at secondary level even at the expense of French.

This year the Commission for Racial Equality has drawn attention to the position of ethnic minority languages in schools and the desirability of incorporating them into the curriculum in certain cases. The benefits of this would, it is hoped, result in greater mutual respect and understanding between the various communities, but it cannot be denied that the practical problems and potential for disaster inherent in such a scheme are enormous.

These three principles of choice - cultural, economic and social - all express sound and humane values. But we are entitled to ask whether the aims they express are consistent with the patterns and trends which will determine the world in which our young people will be living in 25 years.

As modern communications technology accelerates and transforms international society on a scarcely conceivable scale, it is certain that the present tendency towards larger cultural and economic groupings will be reinforced. These groupings will be dominated by the international languages: English, Chinese, Spanish,

Arabic and Russian. It is surely not unreasonable to expect our educational policy-makers to acknowledge this fact by taking a more comprehensive view of the educational system and the place of foreign languages within it.

It would be pointless to repeat twenty experiments such as a junior school French, or to create another post-1957 Russian bubble. A more useful approach would be to try to decide which needs which language, at what stage and for what purpose. French, German and Spanish should be retained as first foreign languages at secondary level since the explosion of cultural identity is of paramount importance at this stage. There is also ample opportunity outside the classroom for schoolchildren to experience these countries at first hand. The lack of such opportunity, together with the unattractive image projected by the USSR, certainly played a key role in hastening the demise of Russian from the school curriculum.

The most significant changes should be reserved for higher education. Universities and polytechnics could be encouraged to offer standard courses in the major languages to complement all other degree courses. Courses in Chinese, Spanish, Arabic and Russian could be organized centrally and economically within each institution, students could be examined in the most appropriate way and have their achievement recorded in their degree certificates.

One practical advantage of this arrangement would be that all the languages could be taught from scratch, so that the problem of trying to accommodate many different levels of previous knowledge would not arise. Further, the foreign language course could be separated entirely from the major discipline and would not distort the result of the student's final examination.

If these proposals were implemented the structure and administration of many of the more modern types of degree courses involving languages would be simplified, but the choices open to students throughout the whole range of subjects would be increased. Nor would the position of the traditional career linguists be prejudiced - the demand for teachers of French, German and Spanish would be relatively stable so that the career prospects for those who wished to enter teaching would not be diminished.

In addition, another category would be created with the demand for teachers in Russian, Chinese, Spanish and Arabic in the shibboleths attached to single honours courses in modern languages could be overcome, it might eventually be possible to have more teachers qualified to teach two or three languages to O and A level, so that the GCSE results would look less lopsided than they will certainly do this summer.

(\*Foreign Language Assessment and Provision: Assessment of Performance Unit Occasional Paper 2.)

Jeffrey Johnson is Director of Foreign Language Studies, City of Birmingham Polytechnic.

## Le jeu en vaut la chandelle

By Paddy Carpenter

Back in the mid-seventies when one would be frivolous about such matters I wrote in a Central Bureau magazine that if you were to lay out all the foreign language assistants head to toe in a straight line they would reach from the King's Cross to Walthamstow. The UK that year (1974/75) employed just under 5,000 assistants and enjoyed considerable bargaining power when negotiating with partners abroad for extra places for British assistants.

The situation is now very different (this year's intake wouldn't get any further than Finsbury Park). Through local authority cuts we have lost almost half the above posts in the UK and much of our bargaining power abroad. The simple fact, but one that is so often forgotten is that the assistant scheme is an exchange arrangement and unless broad reciprocity is achieved our partners in other countries will not feel obliged to increase or even maintain the number of posts available for our assistants (600 priority candidates including my eldest son have failed again this year to find a post abroad). Added to our weakened position at the negotiating table is the competition we now have to face from other anglophone countries which have more recently entered the network. (Well over 100 posts in France for example are now reserved for assistants from the United States).

Over the same period that we have been reducing posts in the UK all other major countries have increased their intake, but not always in favour of British applicants. Confidence abroad in the scheme is running high and the Commission in Brussels would almost certainly have invested heavily in support had not Community politics put a spanner in the works.

What do we feel about the scheme at home? Did 30 local authorities decide not to employ any more assistants because they no longer valued their services? Of course not. On each occasion that an authority has withdrawn it has been on financial grounds alone. The news is usually accompanied by an anguished note from the modern language adviser mourning the loss of this unique resource. And when authorities are said to have withdrawn from the scheme they only really withdraw from one half of the scheme, the half that directly costs money. The students from the authority in higher education will still be able to apply for an assistant post abroad and thereby save their authority the cost of a maintenance grant at a foreign university. That is unless or until our partners abroad start looking more closely at the home address of would-be assistants and working out

whether the local authority in question is "still in the scheme". And I know one eagle-eyed French administrator who has already ordered his map of UK local authorities.

A modern language adviser in an authority which no longer employs assistants summed it up like this "One aspect of the scheme which is rather understated is its importance in the training of modern language teachers. Those who have been abroad as an assistant generally consider it to have been the most important year of their training. Of the 13 probationers appointed to the authority this term, ten have been assistants. I hope we can go on recruiting former (British) assistants at this rate or higher - on shortlists they are almost always the best candidates. It does seem unfair however that we should do so when we are among a minority of countries who undertake no reciprocal arrangements with France, Germany and Spain." Now there's a man with a sense of justice.

It is this sort of anomaly together with pressures from home and abroad that persuaded the DES two years ago to set up discussions with the local authority associations about alternative means of financing the employment of assistants. To establish the credentials of the scheme for these discussions questionnaires were sent to all institutions of higher education sending students abroad and all local authorities whether they employ assistants or not. The results of the survey are yet to be published but if I were to speculate I would say that there would be an overwhelming vote of confidence in the contribution made by both halves of the scheme to the learning and teaching of modern languages. It will simply confirm what the language associations, NALA and the professors and teachers in higher education have been telling us for years.

We have had an initial seal of approval with the publication last January of the HMI report on assistants in Sheffield in which the authority, the schools and the assistants all came out with high marks. More hard evidence will be forthcoming from the work of a small university research team looking at the language acquisition of British students spending a year abroad as assistants. International cooperation in the training of assistants has gone a long way to improve performance in the classroom and provoke a healthier reaction to the culture shock that sometimes knocks the young foreigner for six before he or more likely she has begun to understand the subtleties of

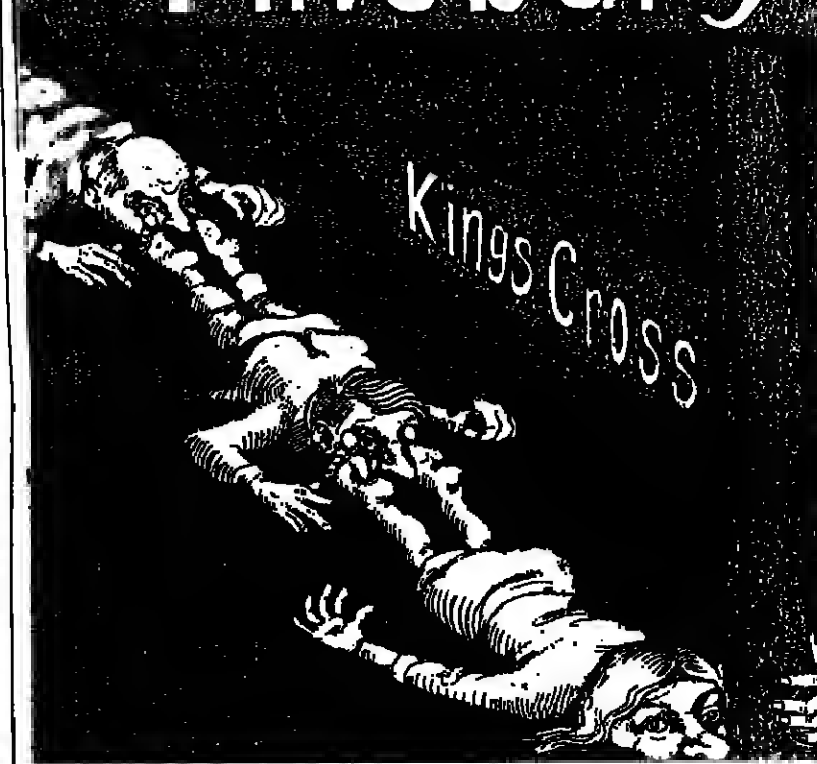
Inland Revenue and morning assembly. Coupled with this of course is the increased awareness of teachers of their own important role in making the best use of the assistant.

In the last two issues of the Modern Languages Extra of The TES there have been articles on the assistant by serving teachers, one very much in favour and the other asking whether after a number of problems with a succession of assistants the game was really worth the candle. It will not surprise my friends if I say I profoundly disagree with the conclusions reached by the latter although I would never underestimate the problems he described nor the problems confronting the assistant (which he did not describe).

The contribution the assistant makes in the classroom is crucial and not all assistants pass the test (nor do all probationers, and I remember well the pig's ear I made of my own first year in teaching). Crucial though it may be however, work with pupils is not the only contribution made by assistants. As a former language adviser I remember how invaluable the assistants were on INSET courses for local language teachers and intensive residential courses for sixth formers. I could go on and give more examples of the imaginative way in which the assistant is used in some authorities to the benefit both of the school and of the assistant who is more likely to complain if she is under-used.

What would be difficult to put into any final analysis of the scheme would be the contributions, sometimes totally unexpected of some individual assistants whom I have known over the years: the Vietnamese assistant from Rennes who finished the year by

## Finsbury



curing all his colleagues' backaches with acupuncture; the two British assistants in Sicily who helped to set up an educational link with a Welsh authority; the young man from Senegal who played such a leading part in the world studies course at his school in Cambridgeshire; the Austrian assistant who as a qualified ski instructor saved his school a packet on the local dry ski slope; the British assistant who broke his nose playing rugby for Toulouse and who is now a senior languages inspector in the UK; the

French assistant in Essex who crossed the Channel in a dingy on a sponsored row. And the contribution of all those assistants who brought their youthful charm and challenging viewpoints if only briefly into the lives of pupils and teachers alike. I am sure that with the concerted efforts of all concerned and the right financial formula we can get them back to Walthamstow.

Paddy Carpenter is Deputy Director of the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges.

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Eddie Ross



EXTRA

# Why German?

Margaret Tumber puts the case for German as the first foreign language

This question has been put many times by parents, pupils, and colleagues. An attempt to answer it should not only serve to satisfy these enquiring, interested parties, but in touching on much wider issues in the teaching of Modern Languages might also highlight the acute relevance of the question at the present time.

In our particular case the adoption of German as the first foreign language has prompted the question and, at school level, provides the answer. The school is an 11-16 comprehensive. It is a social priority school, 67 form entry with a substantial remedial intake. Prior to 1979 French was introduced to all pupils in Year 1. The appointment of a new HOD Modern Languages in September 1979 presented the opportunity for change. The new HOD was a Germanist; of the two other members of the department only one offered both French and German while both offered German. The school had a caretaker who spoke fairly fluent German, well established links existed in the town between youth and adult groups and their counterparts in the twin town of Mönchengladbach. Local conditions favoured the decision to make the school a "German" school. Now German is taught to all pupils in mixed ability groups up to the end of Year 3. It appears alongside beginners' French in the options. Currently some 50% of pupils in years 4 and 5 - boys and girls in fairly equal measure - continue language work in the Upper School.

The reasons outlined seek to explain the course of action taken in a particular set of circumstances. Are they merely acceptable as such or is there justification for furthering the cause of German as the first foreign language in schools which goes beyond the locally

expedient? Before embarking on a closer investigation of this point it would be as well to look at the present state of affairs with regard to foreign language learning and teaching in the UK.

French has traditionally been the first, and for the majority, the only foreign language encountered by foreign language learners in our schools. From the time of its arrival with the Normans the acquisition of French has been regarded as an accomplishment - necessary for the educated - essential for the diplomat - a refinement rather than anything approaching a requirement for everyday living. More recently, as the study of Modern Languages has become more widespread in schools, French may have become less exclusive in one sense but its predominance has been revealed as a positive threat to the existence and ultimate survival of other languages in the school curriculum. A glance at publishers' catalogues reveals many more texts on offer for those concerned with French than for those interested in other languages and gives some indication of the relative ratings of the various foreign languages.

These first impressions - a result of supply and demand - are, however, backed by formidable statistics which confirm the entrenchment of French as the first foreign language. Figures quoted in Sheila Browne's address as Senior Chief Inspector to the JCLA Conference at York in March 1983 revealed that in 4,400 schools French was the first foreign language taught as opposed to 300 where German occupied this position. This discrepancy is further borne out by replies to the APU in Modern Language questionnaire of June 1983 which reportedly (David Lister TES, August 1983)

showed that out of 1,049 schools who sent in returns only 6 per cent taught German as the first foreign language.

Those working in the field of Modern Languages have reacted positively to the criticisms of language achievement in the UK and have seized upon the chance offered by the promise of exam reform to look closely at aims and objectives. The undeniable priority of place enjoyed by French and the urgent need to gain equal recognition for other languages have brought forth comment in the deliberations at all levels.

In drafting 16+ National Criteria for French, other languages were seemingly accorded equal status:

"Teachers of other modern languages are invited to comment on the report of the French Subject Working Party as if it had been written for their own subject." Although the response was that the criteria could be applied to other languages (July 1982), concern about the inferior status accorded languages other than French has persisted in comment on present circumstances and in fears for the future.

Contained in the February 1983 MLA policy statement was the observation:

"There is at present serious imbalance in the choice of first foreign language and we suggest that each i.e. be asked to guarantee a variety of choice between languages in its area," and at the JCLA Conference in March resolutions on this very topic were put forward.

Comment on the DES consultative paper *Foreign Languages in the School Curriculum* (Nick Wood TES), suggests that such ideas are acknowledged at the highest levels where it is recognized that: "...there are 'cogent reasons' for reducing the dominant position of French" and suggested that: "...local authorities and schools combine to ensure that variety of languages are given top priority in each area of the country."

From such pronouncements it is clear that there is no move afoot to abandon the teaching of French but rather to safeguard and foster the teaching of other foreign languages in schools. Indeed, if the argument put forward by Eric Hawkins in the 1982 Twynham Lecture that "...the first language can be an excellent apprenticeship for the second" and the learning of a foreign language is regarded as the means to master the skills needed for language learning, and not only the acquisition of a new means of communication, then the question of which language should be presented first to English native speakers becomes a worthwhile issue, and the theme "Why German?" a pertinent point of investigation.

The example given above of a particular school demonstrates how the agent of change, it is vital for the future of the curriculum in our schools to recognise that there are more general arguments to be advanced for the case of German as the first foreign language than this necessarily parochial instance might suggest.

Over recent years there has been

great concern at the reduction in the numbers of students in schools, colleges and universities in the field of modern languages. Running parallel to this basic worry has been the realisation that boys were showing an even greater reluctance than girls to opt for languages. This topic was investigated at the 1983 JCLA Conference (Bob Powell: *Opting in and opting out: Girls and boys and language learning*) and the more far reaching effect of the lack of male language teachers was pin-pointed in the survey *Modern Languages and Teacher Supply* where P D Morris and A Smalley write: "A second area of difficulty is in supply teaching. This seems to be because of the undoubted fact that a large majority of Modern Language teachers are women, and the problem of supply cover for maternity leave is worrying many i.e. advisers."

Clearly there is a need to attract more boys to the study of foreign language. German could well have a role to play here. Boys do not shy away from learning German on the grounds that it is a cissy subject. The initial attraction may be based on information drawn from comics and war stories but the subsequent willingness to continue in the subject at the option stage is equal to that of girls in our experience.

If language teaching is to take its fair share of the load in the comprehensive school then it must be able to cater not only for the needs of boys as well as girls, but also for pupils of all abilities. German, it may be argued, with all that grammar and complicated word order is too difficult a language to be taught across the whole ability range. Traditionally, it has been offered to a selected few. For the native speaker of English, though, German, in its initial stages, is joyously easy to understand. There are enough words in everyday use in German which sound (and look) like their English counterparts to allow absolute beginners of any ability level to experience immediate confidence-boosting success at their encounter with spoken and later written language.

In language learning first impressions are of the utmost importance. Before any steps forward can be made in learning the learner must be in the right frame of mind. No matter how much of the foreign language is used in the classroom, or how closely the foreign language environment is simulated, the whole business of learning is nobody's business if the learner is not naturally spoken, in a huge game of make-believe. The game must be taken seriously by both learner and teacher. A simple corollary to greeting someone in German - the handshake - can from the first moment on break down barriers and represent a framework for all subsequent work in the area. If the teacher is ready to shake hands individually with each of thirty pupils on first meeting then nobody ever needs to feel embarrassed in the context of German language lessons.

The services of German language assistants who generally take their presence in a classroom seriously can be invaluable in this respect.

It has been assumed that, in line with current thinking in language teaching, listening and understanding, and speaking, will be the first two skills areas to receive attention in the classroom. With the transition from oral skills to those of writing, new problems present themselves. At this point German has distinct advantages. The transition from listening and speaking, to reading and writing is made less daunting by the secure relationship of sound to symbol.

Once the spelling rules are presented and the patterns demonstrated, reference back to well chosen examples will always furnish the required help. The need to learn to write every noun with a capital letter (and to remember to add *und* where necessary) re-emphasises, at the secondary school level the careful approach to the skill of writing first experienced at the primary school. Insistence on accuracy, where it is appropriate, is valuable training for the more able pupil, who may need to develop this skill for more advanced academic work in languages or other subject areas; and, writing a new language, in however limited a form, will give the very low ability pupil a second chance at improving the basic skill of writing.

Listening is a skill which is increasingly neglected in all areas of life today: television has taken the place of radio, pictures almost always accompany news. German, when spoken even moderately carefully by native speakers is rarely a completely jumble of sound. Presented with the aid of developing listening skills in the classroom German can not only increase the confidence of language learners but also make a valuable contribution to the development of a skill area neglected in other subject areas.

Germany as a country or as a political entity is no longer a "foreign" proposition as it once was. More people visit Germany on holidays in the UK and West Germany are both in the EEC and nowadays both "on the same side". German is becoming more and more an acceptable language for European native speakers to learn. German registered cars and HGVs are seen everywhere on our roads. Goods in supermarkets and on market stalls come from Germany - in their German wrappers and packets - instructions for electrical goods and for games and toys are in German - sometimes without English alongside. A backsliding job in Germany advertised in a local paper asks for a basic knowledge of spoken German as a coach driver for a local beer festival and needs to cope with the form-filling and the petrol regulations at the border.

The justification for increasing the number of people who have at least a basic knowledge of German is clear. The way to bring this about is to increase the amount of German taught in schools by increasing the number of teachers. The man is the first foreign language. The answer to the question "why German?" is simply "why not?"

Margaret A. Tumber is Head of Modern Languages, Grays School, Grays, Essex.

## Berlin Hauptstadt der DDR

One of the few good things which can be said of a 31-year stint of teaching modern languages is that it has at least provided me with a worm's-eye view of a curious evolutionary process. This subject, we are told, has changed out of all recognition during the past few decades. Is this assertion true, or can we indeed remark with a nice appropriateness: "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose?"

During my own schooldays in the late 30s and early 40s French and German were still being taught on the same lines as Latin - the approach now so lightly dismissed as the old 'grammar-school'. It would, however, be a mistake to assume that this meant dreary lessons, for the fact is that the sheer solemnity of grammatical analysis, especially when foisted on a lively class of teenage boys, tended to produce plenty of disruptive mirth. Take, for example, the ritual of reciting that silly football team of pronouns: "...We soon learnt to bawl out the two (ly...en) so that it sounded like the howling of an ass... I can still hear my French teacher shouting: 'Forward, the donkey!' And I can still feel the sting of his cane across my left palm. He taught by direct method, but had to resort to English and the stick when things got out of hand.



But it was when we heard his command "Lisez!" that we knew we were in for a delicious morsel of humour which I imagine few of us have tasted since. The practice of reading in chorus - so common in those days - certainly had the advantage of making sure that everybody mouthed some French, but to ask a whole class of schoolboys to chant in unison was to ask for trouble. We loved it. I can still hear us yelling out those choice phrases from the course by H F Collins: "petite polire... petite polire" (apparently a therapeutic exercise designed to reduce the cavernous orifice of the young fillet de la grande bouche). And then we would take a passage and mutter away idiotically until we came, for example, to the word 'l'homme', which we sang out, loud and clear, with a dutiful stress on the second syllable. But our greatest pleasure - and something we had gradually brought to a fine art - was that we started our chorus by keeping strictly to the poem of our reading, until it became an incomprehensible chaos, with each of us solemnly telling away at our own speed, oblivious to all around us and with flying chagrin when our poor French master tried to get us to stop.

One day H F Collins in person turned up in one of our French classes. I cannot recall whether we favoured him with a mass-murder of his text, but I will remember the deference with which he was treated by our teacher. At that time there were few courses to choose from and successful authors enjoyed almost divine status.

The text-book was our Bible, all-sufficient, and hardly ever supplemented by the teacher's own material. We were, however, encouraged to borrow adventure stories from the library, especially those little pink Oxford readers, such as *La Mission de Saint Karigan* by L. Boutinon. Twenty years later I tried this on one of my own classes. They found it hilarious, but it lacked them useful structures and vocabulary and helped them towards becoming fluent readers of French - something so little in evidence today.

Looking back, I would estimate that when I was at school our passive knowledge of French was better than our present-day comparable knowledge of English. I think that we could slog and understand - *La Marseillaise* - in the Third Year! The weakness in those days lay in the lack of contact with everyday life in France. French was an academic exercise, a linguistic algebra - and yet that old grammatical approach gave us a substantial foundation on which to build both the living language and an enjoyment of literature.

This approach was still in vogue in 1952, the year of my first teaching post. It was in a boys' public school where everybody took Latin, and where the standard beginners' French text-book was Nelson's *First French Course* by Ritchie and Moore. The coloured plates - which we also had enlarged as wall-charts - made everything seem incredibly old-fashioned, because the cloche hats and veteran cars reflected the period of the first edition - 1927.

Each chapter of this course was simplicity itself. First, a short passage of grammatical explanation (eg 'In French, every noun is either masculine or feminine - and everything as well as every person is spoken of as 'he' or 'she''). Then a short French-English vocabulary. This was followed by three types of exercises:

- "Read aloud then translate into English"
- "Translate into French" and
- "Answer in French the following questions."

Dull though this may seem, the lads seemed to enjoy it. At least you knew exactly where you were with Ritchie and Moore - a substantial diet, fed in carefully measured portions. I supplemented it, of course, in various ways. For example, I rounded off my first term by teaching them all to sing the *carol* // *est né* a practice I have maintained for thirty successive Christmases.

At my second school - a mixed grammar - I first encountered Mrs. Saxelby's early-headed young Toio in *En Route* followed by *En Marche* and *En France*. Excellent stuff - lively and varied - but difficult for some of the grammar-school classes, and well above the heads of the same age-group in the broader ability band of our present comprehensive. Like many grammar school teachers, I also served a long apprenticeship with the monolithic Whitmanish, whose thoroughness I found invaluable in preparing candidates to cope with prose. His *Advanced French Course* (we rarely remembered his co-author C D Jukes) remained the corner-stone of my Sixth Form work for so long that I still know whole sections of the best passages and poems by heart - and some of the weak bits, too, eg "Lucy pinched my nose".

In the sixties we adopted Nelson's *Modern Methods French Course* by Crompton and Loveman. Even in Book 1 there were optional passages of English for translation into French, but although the material looks rather stodgy there was a welcome relevance to contemporary France. We celebrated the beginning of the seventies by entering the brave new world of Audio-visual French, and made our first acquaintance with the Marsaud family. I must confess that I have never really warmed to them - not the sort of family either I or my classes would particularly want to spend a holiday with. It was so difficult to dissociate them from those petty interrogations about who was who, and who was where - and those interminable repetitions of phrases, giving the effect of parrot-fashion French.

We welcomed the tapes, which meant not only lots of authentic French, but a variety of voices. I am sure listening comprehension improved, and classes were eager enough to answer questions - though this was so often done without real understanding. Accuracy suffered so did the ability to produce French rather than merely recognize it and echo it.

In 1971 our grammar school became an 11-18 comprehensive, eventually reaching a peak of 1,800. French was gradually extended across the whole ability range - including the remedial children who had great difficulty with English. The audio-visual course, at first taught across the whole of the First Year, yielded to *Eclair* for the less able, with its snippets of everyday material - excellent in themselves, but, to my mind, all rather shapeless, with the attendant danger of a comic-strip approach, such as the pathetic

# Looking back

By Arnold Kellett

Why should this still be so? I believe that the reason is staring us in the face. No matter how crisp and realistic a course, no matter how energetically we work at it, the fact remains that sight of whole classes blissfully reduced to colouring their work-books.

Over the years, I have naturally produced my own material - including two readers and an O Level revision course - and like most of my colleagues, I have experimented with all kinds of courses and approaches. At one period I used to film the kids acting out stories, which I then showed as cassettes, after the fashion of that delightful *Monsieur Carré* series by Macmillan. We found this a useful way of preparing for the O level picture composition. But for this kind of thing you need time - far more time than is available to the average teacher, who nowadays in any case tends to be exhausted by the insurmountable problems posed by teaching languages to the less able - particularly from the Third Year onwards. In my very last year, for example, I have taken 32 of 40 periods, teaching every year in the school.

This matter of a work-load too great to permit experimentation and the preparation of home-made courses is one reason why early retirement is so desirable. But in some ways I shall be sorry to leave at a time when modern language teaching really is in the melting pot and the latest DES report officially acknowledges the gravity of our problems. For the truth of the matter is that when all the evolutionary adaptations have been tried - grammar-grind, direct method, audio-visual, audio-lingual, graded texts, 16+ courses like David Sprake's excellent *Communications*, for example, we must still face the fact indicated by the DES report in the understatement of the year: "Too few school leavers, especially boys, have a reasonable proficiency in a foreign language."

language teachers labour under the very burden known to their predecessors half a century ago. I refer to the sheer size of our classes - a problem for all subjects, but peculiarly so for languages.

After 30-odd years I am absolutely sure of these four facts:

- The best way to learn a language is to have one pupil surrounded by several teachers - the way we learn our mother tongue.
- The next best way is for one pupil to have one teacher.
- The next best way is to teach pupils in very small groups.
- The worst possible way is to have one teacher confronted by groups of around 30 pupils.

Learning a language is an individual, face-to-face affair. You cannot expect good results from mass-production. This, I believe, is the principal reason why the standard of language-learning (I do not say language-teaching) is so lamentably low. While classes remain as large as they were when I was at school, what else can we expect?

The other day I saw a film which showed the teaching of English in China - to a very large class of children. The teacher had them yelling out in chorus, again and again. If it had not been for the incredible motivation and strict discipline it might have been one of those lessons I knew as a boy. This is not to say that my conclusion is that we have come full circle. Even if we have, there is no denying that we have taken on board some good things on the way - especially the universal emphasis on life in the foreign country, well supported by visits and family exchanges. But it really does seem that we have tried everything, and still not found a sure-fire method of turning out youngsters who can handle modern languages without embarrassment.

Nothing remains, perhaps, other than two radical solutions - Chinese style regimentation of our oversized classes, and the happier alternative of teaching languages as we teach musical instruments - in groups small enough for individual attention... What a nice ironical touch it is that the only teachers who will have the time and energy to put individual teaching into practice are those of us who are about to retire!

(Arnold Kellett retired this summer as head of modern languages at King James' School, Knaresborough.)

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who in turn ignores them. There appears to be no framework of discipline, no punishments are allowed, so these could lead to major difficulties in the school council.

Yet children are so worried about the tests that (one hears) they are not infrequently given tranquilizers by their parents to get them to sleep the night before – but the parents egg their children as well as criticizing the teachers. The democratization of schools, which began in the late 1960s, means, among other things, that parents have a say in the running of the school, including the choice of textbooks. One social-studies textbook had to be withdrawn at parents' insistence because it contained an anti-American slur.

Despite their reputation, must the Bachelors be bad linguists? A seminar on the teaching and learning of modern languages on November 3 at the Central Library in Sutton, Surrey, will consider this question.

It is intended as a follow-up to the BBC Horizon programme to be broadcast on Monday, *A Child's Guide to Languages*. The programme discusses various methods of language learning and their validity as a successful method of teaching, making the point that two-thirds of our school children give up language learning without acquiring any useful knowledge of a foreign language.

At the seminar, discussion will be led by Dr Peter N. Reeves, of the University of Surrey, who is an authority on the practical application of language learning, particularly in the field of overseas trade, and an examiner for the Institute of Linguists.

Mr Joe Palfreyman, producer of the "Horizon" series, will also attend the seminar, which will be at the library from 7.30 to 9.00 p.m.



















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